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Editorial

The Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools (CEBTS, www.cebts.eu) was formed in September 2001 after a discussion in the European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference (EBTTC) earlier that year. Today CEBTS has thirty members and one associate member. Every two years the member bodies of CEBTS send representatives to a forum which discusses cooperation issues for the next period of time. Four years ago it was also agreed to incorporate the meetings of EBTTC within the CEBTS Forum.

In July 2012 the Seventh CEBTS Forum was held at Odesa (Odessa in Russian, Odesa in Ukrainian) Baptist Theological Seminary in Ukraine. The setting by the Black Sea attracted many members and the Seminary provided excellent facilities and hosted us in true Ukrainian fashion. Odesa itself is a historic city and noted for an approach to life which enjoys humour and a positive outlook. Those participating in the Seventh Forum certainly experienced this side of Ukrainian life.

The theme of the Forum was 'Going in and Going Out: Spirituality and Mission'. This was a topic which has emerged as a common and important theme amongst our Baptist seminaries in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. In our Forum we explored contemporary situations regarding spirituality and mission in different parts of Europe and we heard several papers delivered around the theme from different perspectives. As on previous occasions, we invited CEBTS lecturers to allow us to publish their papers in this *Journal*. We are glad to report that several consented and so in this and the next edition we will feature some of the papers delivered, adapted for our *Journal* format.

Glen Marshall, in a keynote paper, sets the scene with his work on 'A Missional Ecclesiology for the 21st Century'. Teun van der Leer explores the 'Psalms as a Source of Spirituality and Worship', and I was asked to speak about 'Spirituality and Structures'.

Each lecture delivered was accompanied by plenary feed-back sessions and small group work, which proved to be very helpful for all participants. Though you are deprived of this experience, nevertheless we hope that the articles will provoke reflection and reaction as you read them.

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS

A Missional Ecclesiology for the 21st Century

Glen Marshall

Introduction: Missional Church – A Cri De Coeur

A matter of months ago my denomination's national council decided to reorganise its national and regional structures. The outcome has caused a bit of a fuss. Though prompted by the challenge of a significant budget deficit, many had hoped that the reflection and debate that has taken place would provide an opportunity to shift the entire denomination in a more intentionally missional direction.

Some of those who are less than pleased with the outcome believe that institutional management and mere cost-cutting has won out over bold, missional adventure.

So, for example, one commentator suggests that the decision could be seen as:

... an abject failure of vision by the Baptist Union of Great Britain Council. The opportunity to radically reshape our collaborative life to prioritise mission, encourage entrepreneurial pioneers and release life has been sunk by the shackles of institutional inertia, critically compromised by the politics of power and drowned in detail by navigational neglect.¹

Or take this observation from one of our regional ministers, who was involved in the process himself:

The problem is we don't really know what it means to organise our life around mission. ... The mistake is we believe we are doing mission, lots of it, because we use the word, (even trending it up to 'missional' in many places)... but are we willing to learn from our mistakes? I suspect not ...²

This sense of frustration with regard to a lack of missional focus in the Baptist churches in Great Britain is not confined to issues of denominational organisation. As a college tutor I come across it, for example, when working with those of our ministers who come into college as part of their probationary studies. Many express deep disappointment with what they see as the failure of their churches to embrace the priority of

¹ N. Brighton, 29 June 2012, *BUGB Council - Potential?* From Distinct Reflections: http://neilbrighton.typepad.com/distinct_reflections/2012/06/bugb-council-potential-.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+typepad%2FUUII+%28Distinct+Reflections%29&utm_content=Google+Reader.

² N. Coles, 3 July 2012, *Back To The Drawing Board?* Retrieved 5 July 2012 from The Old Forge: <http://nigcoles.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/back-to-drawing-board.html>.

mission. They complain of being shackled to a form of ministry that is all about maintaining the institution of the local church when they would far rather be giving time to engagement with the communities in which their church is set.

Similarly, every year now our college has applicants for ministerial formation who come to us saying: Well yes, I'm definitely called to Baptist ministry, but not Baptist ministry as it has been. I get much more excited by mission than I do by caring for the church. My vocation is to lead God's people in mission, helping them to serve him in the world. I don't want to be squeezed into the standard mould of what others think a Baptist minister should be.

I also come across similar feelings in my work in Manchester with Urban Expression, an inner city church-planting agency. It is quite common to hear those in our planting teams express a sense of relief at being released from the headache of working with intransigent, inherited churches as well as the great satisfaction that they find getting their hands dirty ministering in the local pub, supermarket or residents' group. Their sense is that *this* is what it's all about.

As these snapshots indicate, there is no doubt about it, mission is clearly a major feature of the contemporary Zeitgeist. Many are convinced that it is in fact a heilige Zeitgeist.³ I am inclined to agree. I can certainly sympathise with the frustration expressed by my sisters and brothers in ministry. But, I have a concern. Sometimes the difficulties that my friends have with the failings of church as it is, leads them, in my opinion, a little too close to a disregard for church *per se*.

There is, I believe, work to be done helping our denomination and those who minister within it to develop a more positive and well balanced view of the church that will, at the same time, encourage them to pursue their calling to a ministry that prioritises engagement with God's world. In short we need a properly missional ecclesiology to provide the context for a properly missional understanding of ministry. And when I say *missional* rather than *missionary* I do so advisedly.

Missional Church, an Adjective, a Book, a Movement, and a Mindset

The regional minister who's blog I quoted suggests that for some at least preference for the word *missional* is evidence of nothing more significant

³ The term was coined by Friedrich Wilhelm Graf in his book of that title, referring to the theological shift which took place in German Protestant theology in the 1920s, heralding the era of Barth, Bultmann and Tillich.

than a desire to be trendy, and there's no doubt that in the last fourteen years there has been a definite fashion for all things missional. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that there is nothing behind this other than *mere* modishness.

The reason I am able to be so precise about the timing of the missional trend is the consensus among missiologists that the publication of Darrell L. Guder's *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*⁴ in 1998 provided a huge impetus to the missional conversation, such that it is not unreasonable to see it as launching a movement in much the same way as the publication of the Church of England's *Mission Shaped Church*⁵ spawned the Fresh Expressions movement.⁶

History of the Word 'Missional'

According to Craig van Gelder, one of the writing team behind *Missional Church*, the word *missional* is first used by historian C.E. Bourne in his, *The Heroes of African Discovery and Adventure from the Death of Livingstone to the Year 1882*.⁷ Bourne notes that Bishop Tozar was referred to as 'The Missional Bishop of Central Africa'.⁸ This, and other early examples, simply use the word as a synonym for *missionary*. Van Gelder credits Francis DuBose with the first substantial theological use of the word in his 1983 publication, *God Who Sends*.⁹ DuBose, who draws consciously on the work of Karl Barth, argues that proper biblical theology is missional theology in the sense that it derives from and serves the mission of God who sends the church into the world.¹⁰

But it is Guder and his team who first tie the word *missional* to the word *church* as they work to make clear an explicit connection between

⁴ D.L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁵ Originally referred to as the Fresh Expressions of *Church* movement this is in fact a part of the wider missional church movement. Archbishop's Council, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

⁶ For a helpful survey of the field including a history and an extensive bibliography see C. Van Gelder and D.J. Zscheile (eds.), *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011); B. Briscoe (n.d.), *History of Missional Church*. Retrieved 5 July 2012 from Missional Church Network: <http://missionalchurchnetwork.com/history-of-missional-church/>; B. Briscoe (n.d.), *Reading List*. Retrieved 5 July 2012 from Missional Church Network: <http://missionalchurchnetwork.com/reading-list/>; B. Briscoe (n.d.), *What is Missional?* Retrieved 5 July 2012 from Missional Church Network: <http://missionalchurchnetwork.com/what-is-missional/>.

⁷ Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, p. 42.

⁸ C. Bourne, *The Heroes of African Discovery and Adventure from the Death of Livingstone to the Year 1882* (London: W.S. Sonnenschein, 1983), p. 191.

⁹ Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, pp. 44-5.

¹⁰ F. Dubose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest For Biblical Mission* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1983), pp. 148-9.

missiology and ecclesiology. The writers of *Missional Church* were working as part of a project under the auspices of *The Gospel and Our Culture Network* in North America, an organisation set up to further the ideas of British missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, in particular his suggestion that the biggest challenge facing the church in the West was not the extension of Christianity around the world but the conversion of our own late modern, secularised, postchristendom culture. For around 175 years the church in the West had seen itself as a *sending* church; it now needed to see itself as a *sent* church.

So, whereas the word *missionary* is a portmanteau adjective applying to the many and various aspects of the entire mission endeavour of the church, put simply, the word *missional* seeks to put the emphasis squarely on the *sentness* of the church and does so in order to change the very consciousness of the church in the West, seeking to stir it from what Graham Hill calls, ‘the missional amnesia of constantinianism’.¹¹ Guder himself puts it like this:

With the term missional we emphasise the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people.¹²

Mindset not Programme

It is important then to note that the missional church movement is emphatically not about a new programme, or a new strategy; neither can missional churches be identified by a definitive set of universal markers. Rather the movement is an attempt to foster a new theological imagination, a new self-perception. The answer to the crisis of the church in the West is not to be found in a better missionary technology but in a rediscovery of who we are as church and what we are for. It is a theological issue before it is a methodological one.

Now, everyday language would seem to indicate that this theological rethink has not yet filtered down into the instinctive mindset of church people. It is still commonplace to be asked, ‘Where do you go to church?’ or, ‘Did you go to church last Sunday?’ In other words, there is still a tendency to see church as a place where things happen rather than a people on a mission to whom we belong. Hence the widespread frustration to which I referred earlier.

The heart cry of the missional church movement is that the church is missional by its very nature. Mission is not one of the things that church

¹¹ G. Hill, *Salt, Light and a City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), p. 171.

¹² Guder, *Missional Church*, p. 11.

does, it is *why the church is*. Mission is of the church's *esse* not its *bene esse*. It ought not to be possible to think *church* without also thinking *mission*. There is then more than a little irony in this discussion of adjectives. If the missional church movement is right, we ought not to need an adjective at all. The very fact that the word church has to be qualified whether by the word *missionary* or the word *missional* is itself indicative of the problem, a symptom of amnesia. If we were true to a biblical vision and better informed theologically then we would realise that to say, 'church' is *by definition* also to say 'mission'.

The first move then in the development of a missional ecclesiology is this foundational shift, this *metanoia*, this refusal to see mission as one of the things the church does but rather an insistence on embracing mission as the very reason for the church's being on earth. I say 'on earth' deliberately. Peter Cotterell, my missiology teacher at London Bible College,¹³ used to say that everything the church does it will do better in heaven, except mission. I do think this qualification is important. The ultimate, heavenly, purpose of the church is worship, to revel in and to glorify God. There is many a mission enthusiast who would do well to remember that. I come across more than a few who, in their love of mission, devalue and neglect the corporate worship of the Christian community. In their rush, rightly to emphasise that worship is a whole life reality so much more than services alone, they end up treating corporate worship casually as if it were merely incidental. It is not. Corporate worship is integral to healthy mission and the ultimate outflow of mission.

However, with that caveat in mind, I do want to argue that until our churches make the move to seeing themselves as missional by very nature, existing because of and for the sake of God's mission, all our talk of programmes, strategies and techniques will get us nowhere.

In seeking to establish this new theological imagination, the missional church movement draws regularly on a number of key concepts. It is to these that we now turn. We will look at three of the most significant.

Concept 1.

The *Missio Dei*: Being the Church of the God of Mission

As one who has to mark student essays on missiology there are times when I would dearly love to ban the Latin phrase *missio Dei*. When students are studying mission their deepest pragmatic instincts seem to come to the fore. You can see them breathe a sigh of relief hoping that in *this* class at least

¹³ Now the London School of Theology.

they need not bother with overly academic theology with its obscure labels and arcane language. And yet you should see the enthusiasm with which they lay their tongues and their typing fingers to this one Latin phrase, *missio Dei*. They seem to believe that it has magical powers. They use it like an incantation in the hope that, by merely sprinkling it around their assignment, extra marks will be conjured from the tutor's hard heart.

If the fondness of pragmatically-minded missiology students for the words *missio Dei* is interesting, it is quite remarkable that the phrase and the notion to which it points, namely that mission is first and foremost the mission of an intrinsically missionary God, has come to command such a secure consensus across the theological spectrum. It is hard to find any who would dispute this way of seeing mission.

The Emergence of the Idea

The idea came to prominence through the work of Karl Barth. His insistence on redivinising theology and his recovery of a deeply Trinitarian approach to dogmatics had, of course, many wide-ranging consequences, one of which related directly to mission. In his address to the 1932 Brandenburg Missionary Conference Barth says, '... the term *missio* was in the ancient church an expression of the doctrine of the trinity – namely the expression of the divine sending forth of self, the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world'.¹⁴ Barth then relates this to the gathering, forming, and sending of the church into the world. The church has its being because of and in service of the self-sending of God.

The phrase itself, though, does not enter common currency until the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952, when Karl Hartenstein uses it in his report to argue that:

Mission is not just the conversion of the individual, nor just obedience to the word of the Lord, nor just the obligation to gather the church. It is the taking part in the sending of the Son, the *missio Dei*, with the holistic aim of establishing Christ's rule over all redeemed creation.¹⁵

Similarly, Georg Vicedom, in his reflections on the same conference published in 1965, writes of the *missio Dei*, stressing that mission was, 'God's very own work' and that the church and the church's mission 'are

¹⁴ N.E. Thomas (ed.), *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), p. 27.

¹⁵ R.C. Bassham, *Mission Theology, 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension, Ecumenical, Evangelical and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), p. 332.

only tools of God, instruments through which God carries out His mission'.¹⁶

Debate over Implications and Emerging Consensus

Even as the phrase came to prominence, there was a debate over just what it implied: did God's initiative and agency in mission mean that the church would become marginalised as God pursued divine purposes in the world through mundane, secular historical process as, for example, J.C. Hoekendijk argued?¹⁷ Or, as evangelicals through the emerging Lausanne movement continued to insist, did God choose to pursue divine purposes in particular through the church? More recently something approaching a consensus seems to be emerging along the lines of what Van Gelder calls *The Integrated View*, which sees the church participating in the mission of God in two ways:

First, [*missio Dei*] includes an understanding of God as present in the world beyond the church, where God is at work through both the initial life-giving work of the Spirit and the continuing work of the Spirit to bring healing to all creation, with the church participating in that healing. Second, it includes an understanding of God through the Spirit working to bring reconciliation to the world through God's redeemed community.¹⁸

The same view appears in the influential Church of England report, *Mission Shaped Church*:

The mission of God as creator through Christ, in the Spirit, is to bring into being, sustain and perfect the whole creation ... The mission of God as redeemer, through Christ, in the Spirit, is to restore and reconcile the fallen creation ... The mission of the Church is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the Son's mission from the Father to the world.¹⁹

Divine Agency, Divine Dependence

What this understanding of mission does is to stress the primacy of divine agency in mission, which ought to have one very positive benefit for the church in twenty-first century Europe. Faced as we are, in the West at least, by marginalisation and decline, the risk is that we respond in faithless, God-denying ways, acting as if the survival of the church and the growth of the kingdom are *our* responsibility. As Walter Brueggemann points out, the

¹⁶ G.F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1965), pp. 5-6.

¹⁷ J. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1966).

¹⁸ Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, p. 58.

¹⁹ Archbishop's Council, *Mission Shaped Church*, pp. 84-5.

temptation facing a people in exile is twofold, on the one hand denial, and on the other despair.²⁰ Either we bury our heads in the sand and act as if things are in fact as they always were, imagining that if only we can sing loudly enough and pull the ecclesiastical duvet up high enough, we can stay secure, happy, cosy, all the while choosing to ignore the fact that this is a cosiness unto death. Sadly, this is a popular option among too many of our churches. Or alternatively, in desperation, we crank the handle faster in the mistaken belief that we can somehow sweat our way to kingdom come, or we strategise smarter in the mistaken belief that we can scheme our way to kingdom come.

This is where a true grasp of the implications of the *missio Dei* serves us well. It does us the favour of placing our attention squarely back on God. It puts the church in its place by reminding us that the true agent of mission is God. It fosters an approach to mission that is at one and the same time more humble, more hopeful, more prayerful.

Missio Dei and the Holy Spirit

More recently this appreciation of the dependence of the church on God has been further emphasised by those who have pointed out that in practice most missiologists working with this notion have paid insufficient attention to the role of the Spirit in the divine mission. Neglect of the role of the Spirit in divine sending contributes to an overly functional, mechanistic, less organic view of the church and its mission. If we are not careful, the original conception of the Trinitarian *missio* can lead to a passing the baton relay-race understanding of mission whereby the Father sends the Son, who then sends the church. This pays insufficient attention to the present mysterious ministry of the Spirit upon which the very life of the church depends.

Among others, John Zizioulas has been significant in correcting this imbalance. He reminds us:

The Spirit is not something that ‘animates’ a Church which already somehow exists. The Spirit makes the Church be. Pneumatology does not refer to the well-being but the very being of the Church. It is not about a dynamism which is added to the essence of the Church. It is the very essence of the Church.²¹

Or as Hans Küng puts it:

²⁰ W. Breuggemann, *Conversations Among Exiles*, 2-9 July 1997. Retrieved 7 July 2012 from Religion-online: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=26>.

²¹ J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 132.

If there is no Spirit, it does not mean that the community lacks its missionary commission but that there is no community at all.²²

The fact is, while Christ *institutes* the church, the Spirit *constitutes* the church – and empowers it for mission and service.²³

As one who came to faith at the height of the Charismatic movement in the mid 1970s, I long for today's missional church to catch something of the sense of Spirit-dependent humility and Spirit-inspired openness that characterised that movement at its best.

I pray too that the missional church movement will manage to retain a Spirit-engendered flexibility and openness to on-going reform and renewal that the Charismatic movement sadly lost. Küng again:

The church under the Spirit may never simply leave things as they are, but must continually allow all things to become new in the Spirit who renews the face of the earth and also of the church.²⁴

If this truly is the *missio Dei* then it patently has also to be the *missio Spiritus* served by a church that is dependent, creative and open to renewal.

Before leaving behind the theme of the *missio Dei*, one final observation from recent thinking on the subject might be helpful.

Trinitarian Theology – Eastern Orthodoxy

As noted in our earlier reference to Barth, Trinitarian theologising about mission has, until recently, tended to stay predominantly within the Western tradition with its tendency towards modalism. More recently however, missiologists have been turning to the Eastern, Orthodox stream of Trinitarian thought with its more deeply relational conception of the Godhead.

The emphasis from theologians such as John Zizioulas on the inherently relational nature of divine being and, therefore, of *all* being, has much to offer the church in the West with its temptation to individualism and instrumentality.²⁵ I hope that Colin Gunton is right and the church is indeed learning that it is called to be a 'finite echo or bodying forth of the divine personal dynamics', and 'a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is'.²⁶

The Eastern stress on the *ekstasis* (the outward reaching love), the *koinonia* (communion), and the *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) of the

²² H. Küng, *The Church* (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 165.

²³ Hill, *Salt, Light and a City*, p. 73.

²⁴ Küng, *The Church*, pp. 26-7.

²⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*.

²⁶ C.E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), pp. 74-9.

three persons of the Trinity, if taken seriously, will help the church in mission to remember that its call is a vocation of promise for the wider world.

Van Gelder summarises the missional fruit of an ecclesiology informed by such an understanding of the Trinity:

The church is not a collection of individuals who choose to associate primarily to have their spiritual needs met or do some good in the world. Rather, the church is a community of mutual participation in God's own life and the life of the world – a participation characterized by openness to others. Just as the Trinity's interdependent, communal life is generative and outward reaching in love,²⁷ so too must the church's life be focused towards others and the world.

Such a vision of the church and its mission is a hugely radical challenge, both to church in inherited mode and to many of those who, in pioneering new forms of church, sometimes pay insufficient attention to the missional significance of church as being in communion.

So far we have seen that the rhetorical intent of the missional church movement in using the word *missional* rather than *missionary* is to move the church in the West towards a new theological imagination. This sought-after new self-perception is, at heart, an awareness of the apostolicity of the church: its sentness. Unless the church takes deep into its soul this sense of sentness there is little hope for it no matter what new methods and programmes it might adopt.

We have also considered the significance for the missional church movement of the notion of the *missio Dei*; the Trinitarian God whose very being is missional. First of all, this establishes the sentness of the church in its organic relationship with the God who is the source and pattern of its life. Secondly, it locates the ultimate agency of mission with God rather than the church and, therefore, calls for faith rather than self-reliance, humility rather than hubris, and hope rather than denial or despair. It also emphasises the relational nature of being and, as such, acts as an antidote to the activism and individualism to which the church in the West is so chronically prone.

We now turn to the second theological lens that has been significant for the missional church movement: the reign of God.

²⁷ Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, p. 107.

Concept 2.

The Reign of God: Putting the Church (and the World) in its place

The missional church movement has been loud and insistent in its call for the reign of God to be given far greater prominence in our ecclesiology. If the previous section sought to emphasise that for the missional church movement both the church and its mission can only be understood in relation to God, then this section reminds us of the movement's insistence that the church and its mission can only be understood in relation to the reign of God.

A number of ecclesiologists have been influential in this regard, among them John Howard Yoder who describes the body of Christ as:

... the aftertaste of God's loving triumph on the cross and the foretaste of his loving triumph in his kingdom ...²⁸

More recently, Miroslav Volf, who's autobiographical note in the preface to his *After Our Likeness* catches well the flavour of missional church ecclesiology:

Life in the small Christian community in Novi Sad taught me two basic ecclesiological lessons ... The first lesson: 'no church without the reign of God'. The church lives from something and toward something that is greater than the church itself. When the windows facing toward the reign of God get closed, darkness descends upon the church and the air gets heavy, when the windows facing toward the reign of God are opened, the life-giving breath and light of God gives the church fresh hope. The second lesson: 'no reign of God without the church'. Just as the life of the churches depends on the reign of God, so also does the vitality of the hope for the reign of God depend on the communities of faith.²⁹

Volf's childhood lessons are echoed in *Missional Church*:

The church must not be equated with the Reign of God. The church as a messianic community is both spawned by the Reign of God and directed toward it. ... But at the same time we must say with equal force that the reign of God must not be divorced from the church. ... The divine reign expresses itself in a unique, though not exhaustive or exclusive, fashion in the church.³⁰

²⁸ J.H. Yoder, *The Christian Witness To The State. Institute of Mennonite Studies Series* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life, 1964), pp. 10-1.

²⁹ M. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. x.

³⁰ Guder, *Missional Church*, pp. 98-9.

I personally believe that the church's neglect of the reign of God and consequent failure to see itself in relation to that reign is a huge tragedy. The recovery of a stronger emphasis on the reign of God as we develop our ecclesiologies is crucial and will have a number of significant consequences. Here I identify just two.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

In the first place, a proper understanding of the relationship between the church and the reign of God demands a fuller, more biblical gospel than the gospel-lite that we have in fact preached for the past two hundred years or so.

It is staggering to think that we have been able to read the New Testament and yet reduce the gospel of Jesus to nothing more than a message of personal salvation. Above all else, the good news Jesus preached was good news of the reign of God. Too often the gospel *that Jesus preached* has been missing from the gospel that the church has preached *about* Jesus. We must see that the old evangelical gospel, restricted as it was to saving people from the world, into the church, *en route* to heaven – rather than leaving them to drift blindly into hell – was woefully inadequate.

We need a gospel with ethical content restored. We need a gospel with political vision restored. We need a gospel that is good news for the world and not an offer of escape from the world. And this needs to be the actual *content* of our preaching, not an addendum, an incidental afterthought for enquirers classes – if at all.

Our Approach to Evangelism

Secondly, a more biblical, Jesus-shaped gospel of the reign of God also calls for a renewed approach to evangelism. On this, *Missional Church* is worth quoting at length:

Evangelism would move from an act of recruiting or co-opting those outside the church to an invitation of companionship. The church would witness that its members, like others, hunger for the hope that there is a God who reigns in love and intends the good of the whole earth. The community of the church would testify that they have heard the announcement that such a reign is coming, and indeed is already breaking into the world. They would confirm that they have heard the open welcome and received it daily, and they would invite others to join them as those who also have been extended God's welcome. To those

invited the church would offer itself to assist their entrance into the Reign of God and to travel with them as co-pilgrims.³¹

This suggests a significantly more modest, humble but no less confident tone, something, I would suggest, that is long overdue.

But this is about more than just a new tone; a kingdom-focused ecclesiology will also help us to foster a more integrated and holistic approach to communicating good news. Because the church's communal life serves as *sign* and foretaste of the reign of God we witness by our being – the way we are; because the church's public life arises from being an *agent and instrument* of the reign of God we witness by our doing – the way we act; because the church is the *messenger* of the reign of God we witness by our speaking – the things we say.

Importantly, all these facets of the church's witness to the reign of God are to be held together, as it were in synoptic vision. When they are seen thus, as three facets of the one witness rather than being allowed to compete for primacy, the relationship between them becomes richly synergistic, mutually reinforcing.³²

More could be said about the implications of adopting the missional church movement's emphasis on understanding the church in the light of the reign of God but time has come to move onto the third and final concept from the missional church movement's rhetoric that we will consider in this article: incarnation.

Concept 3.

Incarnation: Church, Culture and Christological Heresy

This is such a widely used trope that in some quarters it is likely to be the first thing that springs to mind when speaking of the missional church movement. So, for example, the third chapter of Frost and Hirsch's widely influential, *The Shaping of Things to Come* is called 'The Incarnational Approach'. It includes this commendably clear statement:

For us, the incarnation is an absolutely fundamental doctrine, not just as an irreducible part of the Christian confession, but also as a theological prism through which we view our entire missional task in the world.³³

Craig Van Gelder, identifies four themes that regularly feature in North American literature on missional church. The third theme is that:

³¹ Ibid., p. 97.

³² Ibid., p. 108.

³³ A. Frost and M. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Books, 2003), p. 35.

The missional church is an incarnational ... ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized context.³⁴

Dwight Zscheile suggests that we see the incarnation of the eternal word as God's ultimate missional participation in human life, arguing that the church must continue to be enfleshed in every human culture.

The corollary of God's bearing humanity in Christ is the church's bearing the burdens of its neighbours as it participates deeply in the life and struggle of the community into which it has been sent and within which it lives.³⁵

Often the rhetorical intent of those who use the metaphor of the incarnation is to critique and correct any approach to mission whereby a church remains detached from its community, living life apart and seeking to attract people out of the community into the separate life of the church. This approach is dubbed 'extractional' by Frost and Hirsch.³⁶

Fundamentally this insistence on an incarnational approach has to be applauded. It is certainly preferable to the approach of those churches that Letty Russell accuses of being guilty of the double sin of being *of but not in* the world.³⁷

Misuse of the Concept

However, my own observation would be that, whereas the more thoughtful authors such as Guder, Van Gelder and Zscheile are careful to avoid this pitfall, many missional practitioners run the risk of building on an inadequate understanding of the incarnation and a rather one-sided approach to cultural engagement.

While I certainly would not go as far as Graham Hill,³⁸ who is so concerned about misappropriation of the doctrine of the incarnation that he suggests we abandon it altogether as a metaphor of mission, suggesting that we stick instead to the language of inculturation and contextualisation, I do think there is room for a far more nuanced use of the image.³⁹

Whereas, in practice, the trope of incarnation is used almost exclusively to advocate a more profoundly contextualised approach to mission, I would have thought that the doctrine of the incarnation, properly

³⁴ Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, p. 4.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 201.

³⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, p. 228.

³⁷ L.M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1993), p. 181.

³⁸ Hill, *Salt, Light and a City*, p. 196.

³⁹ For a helpful treatment of this issue see C. Ott, S. Strauss and T.C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

understood, calls the church instead to commit to a profound identification with our culture while, *at the same time*, cultivating a specific, distinctly Christian counter-identity, an identity rooted in and nurtured by an intentional counter-community.

Yes, the church *is* called to contextualise the gospel, to embody it afresh in profound ways in every culture to which it is sent. Yes, we must recognise that such an engagement will have a right and proper influence, not only on our *communication* of the gospel but also on our *understanding* of the gospel. But we must always remember that this is just one part of the story. Even as the church seeks to identify with the cultures to which it is sent it must also strive to nurture an identity that will be distinctly alien to surrounding society.

Indeed, the very sentness of the church that the missional church movement seeks to emphasise, itself implies a distinction between that which is sent (church) and that to which it is sent (world). The gospel is always communicated within a given culture *but* at the same time it always points beyond that culture to the distinctive culture of God's reign. Each church's vocation is to be culturally bilingual. Its engagement with the world is always to be a *nonconformed* engagement.⁴⁰

Barry Harvey is right then to remind us that the church in every age must make a deliberate *decision to be the church*.⁴¹ We would do well to remember that for such a decision to bear fruit, for it to take on flesh and blood in this post-Christendom age, the church will have to give deliberate, sustained attention to the cultivation of a counter-culture, because, as Guder points out, 'The gospel's transforming impact on a culture is constantly in tension with the culture's reductionistic influence on the gospel'.⁴²

It is this insight that I fear too many of the practitioners who enthuse about incarnational mission fail to appreciate. They would do well to listen to those missiologists who have paid careful attention to the insights offered by the Radical Orthodox, the Post-liberal and the Radical Reformation ecclesiologies. The church is not some cultural *tabula rasa* passively taking the shape of the culture with which it seeks to engage. The church has its own language, its own narrative, its own politics and its own constitutive practices. Attending to these realities need not mean, as some fear, a retreat into a disengaged sectarian form of church. It does mean though that we would do well to learn from the plausibility-building power of certain sectarian structures. On the other hand though if the missional

⁴⁰ Guder, *Missional Church*, p. 117.

⁴¹ B.A. Harvey, *Can These Bones Live? A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics and Social Theory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008), pp.123-7.

⁴² Guder, *Missional Church*, p. 233.

church carries some of the features of a sect, it is always, only, ever a world-affirming sect.⁴³

Barry Harvey again gets it right:

The first Christians consistently described themselves as citizens of an *altera civitas*, another city, with a population garnered from every tribe and language, people and nation ... Although the church fostered its own political identity, thereby denying ultimate authority to Roman rule, it did not seek to isolate its members from the rest of the world ... On the contrary ... It cultivated its social existence as a distinct *politeia* within and for the sake of the world.⁴⁴

In short, as we seek to develop a missional ecclesiology appropriate to the twenty-first century, we will indeed find a rich resource in the image of the incarnation. But we would do well to remember that incarnational orthodoxy calls us to walk a fine line. If there is a missiological equivalent of the heresy of Docetism, being church in such a way that only *seems* to touch the murky realities of a flesh and blood life, we must also be wary of missiological Arianism, so secure in its place in the created order that it becomes *nothing more* than one creaturely reality among so many others.

Conclusion

The reflections offered in this article arise from my appreciation of what missional church *theorists* are advocating and my concern about some of the ways in which missional church *practitioners* go about their work. My call is not for the missional church movement to stop, still less to go into reverse. Rather I hope that those on the front line seeking to plant new missional communities and working and praying to see the missional transformation of existing churches would pause long enough to subject their practice to some proper theological reflection – specifically ecclesiological reflection.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch coined a widely influential formula, ‘Christology Determines Missiology Determines Ecclesiology’. Frost has recently acknowledged that this may have had unintended consequences.⁴⁵ Many have been persuaded; they have rallied to the cry, Christ first, mission second and then church. In some quarters there has been a rush to push mission up the agenda, to allow a Christ-inspired engagement with the

⁴³ For some interesting observation on sectarian plausibility structures and Christian mission see Duncan MacLaren’s *Mission Implausible: Restoring Credibility to the Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ B.A. Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (New York, NY: Trinity, 1999), pp. 23-5.

⁴⁵ Hill, *Salt, Light and a City*, p. ix.

world to call the shots and, in effect, to allow church to take care of itself. This may be understandable but it is also unwise. True, longstanding notions of church that see mission as merely one of the things the church does cannot be allowed to continue, but neither can we afford to allow church to become merely incidental, nothing more than a missional afterthought. There is a need for missional church enthusiasts to start taking ecclesiology rather more seriously. Should they recognise this need they will not have to look far. There are resources a plenty in the writing of the best missional church theorists. I hope it is not too much to expect this fourteen-year-old movement to be a little less adolescent and do itself the favour of listening carefully to the words of its parents.

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The Psalms as a Source for Spirituality and Worship

Teun van der Leer

In this article¹ I want to explore how the Book of Psalms can be a spiritual resource for students, teachers and pastors. I will show that content and structure offer a wealth of possibilities for personal devotion and common worship, not only as we sing the Psalms, but also as we pray them and pray them with Christ.

In the Psalms we are given:

- words *to* God as Word *of* God, to answer Him in praise, worship, supplication and lament;
- words for every mood of life, a daily life with all its heights and depths, that we can and may live before God's face;
- words to pray as part of a community; personal prayer and common prayer are not separated, but integrated;
- words that bring us closer to the heart of God and with that to the heart of our destiny in life.

Introduction

At the heart of our scriptures we find the largest book in the Bible: the Psalms, not just large in its pages, but also in its content. We find the whole of life: heights and depths; you can find a Psalm for every mood. Calvin called it God's pharmacy: for a healthy spiritual life take one or two each day. Luther said that in the Psalms we look straight into the heart of the saints. They can be called the respiration of our spiritual life (breathing in, breathing out). They are 'a Bible within the Bible'.

In the old Oriëntal Church priests had to know 'the whole David' (as they called them) by heart, as a condition for ministry. This might be too much for pastors today, but what they should be capable of is to find their way in this book, learning to breath these Psalms, to eat and drink from what God has to offer in them.

Psalm 1: The stately entrance gate

We do not know too much about the editorial process behind the book of

¹ This article is based on a lecture I gave during the Baptist Teachers' Conference of the Consortium for European Baptist Theological Seminaries (CEBTS) in Odessa, Ukraine, 12 July 2012.

Psalms, but we can see that its order and its structure is not a coincidence. They belong to the *Chetoebim*, the books that answer God's *Torah*, and we see right from the start that Psalm 1 sets the tone: the stately entrance gate of this great edifice, as Hieronymus called it. Someone even called Ps. 1 'the preface of the Holy Spirit'.

Starting with a 'blessed' (the goal, the destination, compare the Sermon on the Mount!) and then talking about this tree full of life and fruit in its season, its leaves that do not wither, planted by streams of water, being an image of them that put their delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it by day and night. 'In all that they do, they prosper'. All they do in that light, in that perspective. This is not a prosperity gospel, but a fruit-bearing gospel, with a promise, as Jesus gave in John 15, 'ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done to you' (John 15:7). This is not the wish we make after we have seen a falling star, and Jesus is not the ghost that appears when we have polished the crystal ball to fulfil our wishes. It is a prayer for bearing fruit in our lives to the glory of God – when we abide in Him and everything we sincerely ask for this purpose of bearing fruit, He will give us; prospering meaning coming to your destination in God, in Christ.

In fact there are two possible ways revealed here: the way of the righteous that seeks fulfilment in God (Piper: 'God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him'²) and the way of the wicked that will perish, finish, end. The wicked way of life, life without God, has no future. We see this immediately in Psalm 2, where prophetically the vain conspiracies and plots of the kings and the nations are laughed at by the Almighty and will perish, over against the 'blessed ones who take their refuge in Him'. Eugene Peterson in his *Answering God, learning to pray from the Psalms*³ calls Ps. 1 and 2 the preparation of our prayer through *Torah* and *Nebi'im*: listening attentively and trusting the kingship of God and his anointed.

The relationship from the Psalms to the Torah is an interesting one. For example, the largest Psalm (119) has 176 verses around the same theme: Praise God for his Torah, his signpost;⁴ starting with a twofold 'blessed' and finishing with the firm prayer 'not to forget your commandments'. This is the joy of the Torah, using all the letters of the alphabet (Ps. 119 is an acrostichon) to sing the praise of God's Word.

The Psalms seem in their structure of five books to echo the Torah:

² www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/god-is-most-glorified-in-us-when-we-are-most-satisfied-in-him, accessed 12 November 2012, from his sermon on Phil. 1:12-26. It is a motto he repeats in most of his work.

³ E. Peterson, *Answering God, learning to pray from the Psalms* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989).

⁴ Compare Derek Tidball, *Signposts. A devotional map of the Psalms* (Nottingham: IVP, 2009).

- 1-41 Genesis: creation (for example Ps. 8, 19, 24, 33);
 42-72 Exodus: desert and exile (for example 42, 43, 44, 54, 55, 57);
 73-89 Leviticus: ‘...to those who are pure in heart (73:1);
 90-106 Numbers: Moses, the man of God (90);
 107-150 Deuteronomy.

This division is interesting as each time these words appear: ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen’ (41, 72, 89, 106). Sometimes this doesn’t seem to fit, but apparently praise is always at the right time.

It is even a decree: ‘This is where the tribes come, the tribes of Israel, to give thanks to the LORD *according to his command*’ (Ps. 122:4, GNB). Ps. 92 calls it ‘tov’ (‘it is good to give thanks to the Lord’) to do this from early morning until midnight. For praise is not dependent on how I feel but on who He is! It is even intriguing to see that the Psalmist doesn’t want to die, because this will end his praise! (Ps. 30:10-13; 115:17-18, compare also Is. 38:18-19).

Words to God as Word of God

The interesting thing in the Psalms is that in them man answers the Word of God *as* Word of God. In the Psalms God gives us our words as his Word, to sing and pray. Speaking *from* God and speaking *to* God becomes one.

Besides singing (which is a strong tradition within the Reformed churches, though becoming lesser so in our Baptist churches) we can pray the Psalms. Bonhoeffer writes: ‘The Psalms are a God given prayerbook full of prayers that we can pray with Christ’.⁵ It is the most quoted book from the Old Testament in the New Testament. Jesus sang and prayed them with his disciples (Mat. 26:30) and quoted many times from them, especially at the cross, for example Ps. 22:2 (quoting the first line might be seen as the whole Psalm!).

When I read Ps. 113-118, the so-called Egyptian Hallel (114), sung at the end of the Passover (113-114 at the beginning, 115-118 at the end), it always moves me to realise that Jesus sang about ‘the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone’ just before he died (Mat. 26:30).

About the Psalms as our prayer book Bonhoeffer continues: ‘The point is not whether the Psalms express what we at that moment feel in our hearts. It might even be better to pray against our own heart in order to pray right.

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Bidden met de Psalmen* (Leiden: Groen, 1995), p. 9. My translations from the Dutch version. The book is also published in English: *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970). See also on this Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms. Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2007).

Not the poorness of our heart, but the richness of God's Word should determine our prayer.'

This is especially important for evangelicals, who tend to think that spontaneous free prayer (*ex tempore*) is the right prayer, since in this the Spirit works. For Baptists this is even more important, since historically we have been 'allergic' to liturgical texts written down on paper. Didn't we free ourselves from the coerced Book of Common Prayer, with all its prescribed texts and prayers? We didn't want to conform to that, we are non-conformists! So a real spiritual sermon is a sermon without notes; a real Spirit-led prayer is a prayer from the heart and not from paper.

But we should realise that our own hearts are limited. My heart is filled with *my* thoughts, *my* feelings, *my* longings, *my* experiences. So a prayer from my heart has its limits! My heart is less broad, less rich and (so) less spiritual than the words of scripture. In the Psalms and even in the prayer tradition of the people of Israel and of the church, the Spirit has given us a treasure of words and language that go beyond my life, my experience, my faith. And by the way: have you also noticed that so many 'spontaneous' prayers from brothers and sisters in the church have become very predictable?

We should be thankful for this broad treasure of words, thoughts and feelings and use them in our prayers; let us pray with and from scripture. Luther writes about this: 'The one that starts praying the Psalms seriously and regularly, will soon send the other, easy, (personal) pious little prayers on vacation and say: Ah, it is not the power and the fire that I find in the Psalms'.⁶

This has simply to do with the fact that by praying the Psalms your prayer is lifted up to the level of the Word of God. And thus your prayer, so to say, 'doubles': you talk *to* God and at the same time fill yourselves *with* His Word.

I want to look now at three spiritual paths/lessons from the Psalms.

1. They help us to live life before God in all circumstances

As I said at the beginning: all of life is there in the Psalms, its heights and depths, from supreme delight to deepest despair and desolation; all our emotions. You could say there is the beating heart of a living human being found in these songs.

So reading and praying the Psalms means recognition and even affirmation of our deepest inner being, our feelings and desires; that all of

⁶ Quoted in Bonhoeffer, *Bidden met de Psalmen*, p. 14.

them have their rightful place in our relationship with God. The Bible is not somewhere far beyond our daily existence, but it goes into it, becomes part of it, even fills it. The Word of God is literally *daily* bread.

This acknowledgement also means that part of the ‘language of faith’ and the ‘instruments’ for our relationship with God, are calling, begging, crying, lamenting and protesting, as well as praising, thanking and honouring! And the last ones are no more holier than the first. Not just ‘I believe and so I’m singing’ (as a well known and loved song in Dutch says), but also ‘I believe and now I’m lamenting’. That is also very biblical. Because you believe in God and his reign, you oppose many times the so-called status quo as being not what God wants.

E. Charpentier writes in his book on the OT:

The whole of human communication at all its levels we find in the Psalms. It is given to us as the Word of God. This teaches us that even in the darkest periods of our doubt or even resistance, God is present and calling, in and through us, and that praise and lament, as long as they are upright, are forms of prayer, expressing what we are going through. For the Word of God does not belong to the language of information but of relation.⁷

2. They teach us to believe and pray with and from within the community

However personal the Psalms can be (Ps. 27:7-14; 77:1-4), they are and remain songs of the faith community. There are quite a few Psalms with an illogical transition from ‘I’ to ‘we’, for example Ps. 122:1-2; 123:1-2; or they start with ‘me’ and conclude within the community, see for example Ps. 22. Many Psalms are even filled with longing for the community: Ps. 42:5 (as fulfilment of vs. 3).

Three times a year Israel was to come *as a people* before God: Easter, Pentecost and the Tabernacles (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). Many Psalms find their origin around these feasts and the journeys towards Jerusalem, and the celebrations around the temple: Ps. 84, 120-134, 96:8; 100:4; 118:19; 26:6; 68:25-26; 66:13-15; 95:6; 138:2; 42:5; 43:4; 63:3.

Prayer never isolates us from the community. There are no such things as ‘my’ prayer life, or ‘my’ relationship with God. Even in your room with the door shut you learn to pray *Our* Father... give *us* today *our* daily bread and forgive *us our* debts (Mat. 6:6, 9-12). We are always connected, always part of the community and ‘our’ bread matters to me at least as much as ‘my’ bread and ‘our’ debts and forgiveness matter to me at least as much as ‘my’ debts and forgiveness.

⁷ E. Charpentier, *Wegwijs in het Oude Testament* (Baarn: TenHave, 1987), my translation.

This makes it even possible to pray *all* the Psalms, even if you do not recognise some of the words while praying them. They might not fit with your life at that moment, but you can pray them for and with an unknown brother or sister for whom they do fit. Why only pray and sing what we experience and feel ourselves? There should be room in our prayer for the experiences and needs of others. *And while praying they can also become our experience, our need and our passion.*

Whilst singing and praying the Psalms we give words to the fears and worries that aren't necessarily ours at that moment, but that might become ours in the future. Then you'll have it in your backpack, your personal spiritual resource! Compare Jonah 2: almost all quotations are from the Psalms. Jonah had learned them, but probably now for the first time in his life he really prays them as his own prayers. Happily he learned them earlier, so now that he needs them, they are to hand.

In this way, singing Psalms becomes part of what Paul calls 'to comprehend *with all the saints*, the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:18).

3. They bring us to the essential: towards the sanctuary

There is a deep longing for the city of God, for the sanctuary, for God Himself in the Psalms: Ps. 27:4; 43:3-4; 63:1-3, 8; 84:1-2; 5-7.

For Asaf the turning point, with all his sincere and real questions and confusion in Ps. 73, came when he 'went into the sanctuary of God', which brought him to the confession that 'there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you' (25) and for the peace which comes from knowing that 'for me it is good to be near God' (28).

I think, for example, this is what Paul means by 'peace that passes all understanding' (Phil. 4:7), having calmed and quieted the soul (Ps. 131:2). In the centre of Ps. 23 we read 'for you are with me'; there are twenty-six words before these words and twenty-six words after. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want', sounds too nice, too pious; it seems unreal: 'green pastures', 'still waters'. Here someone is talking who doesn't yet know the realities and hardships of life – just converted probably – and has still much to learn. But that's not fair. He *does* know about evil, enemies and even the darkest valley. He is not floating far above the realities of life. He is in the midst of it and he can cope with it *because he knows this secret*: 'you are with me'.

God's promises are mostly given in the desert, in exile. These are the places to miss Him, to seek for Him, to cry out for Him, to find Him. Not in a 1-2-3-4 schedule ('we pray and He comes'), but through the (sometimes

long) valleys, through the darkness, through the dry times. Even in the Bible people are not meeting God on a daily basis, nor is there an angel behind every tree. We just need 'A Long Obedience in the Same Direction'.⁸

We began by looking at the stately entrance of Ps. 1. Finally, we now look at the end: Ps. 145-150. In Jewish tradition, Ps. 145 is called 'the Crown Jewel of Praise', prayed daily. Ps. 146-150 are the so-called 'hallelujah-psalms', hallelujah being their first and their last word. In fact, Ps. 150 is one big HALLELUJAH, its last words being, 'Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Hallelujah!'.

Isn't that typical: When we have gone through all our prayers, callings, laments and beggings, and through praying and singing have learned to know the Lord our God 'for better and for worse', then this is what we can finally say, at the conclusion of our spiritual life: 'Let everything that breathes praise the Lord'.

Teun van der Leer, Rector, Baptist Theological Seminary of the Netherlands

⁸ The title of a book on Psalms 120-134 by Eugene H. Peterson (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992). It is about these fifteen 'songs of ascents' ('hammaälôth'): a journey from exile (120) to sanctuary (134). The subtitle is 'Discipleship in an instant-society'.

Spirituality and Structures

Keith G. Jones

Who are these baptistic Christians?

‘Spirituality and Structures’ is intended to engage with the intersection of the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit of God, the Ruach,¹ with what seems to be the compulsion of the disciples of Jesus to organise structures of life for, so we claim, the better ordering of the communities of belief for worship, mission and service. Yet we know that this tension has consequences, certainly if structures begin to corral and confine the dynamics of the Holy Spirit. The title was one given to me by the CEBTS Planning Group;² however, I want to turn the title upside down, or at least, back to front, and begin with ‘Structures’, and then to engage with a view of a ‘Spirituality’ which can de-construct the structures and enable the Ruach of God to open up new dimensions of Christian discipleship in our gathering, intentional, missional, convictional communities³ in Europe and the Middle East.

BWA Message 2005

In 2005 the longer discussion document of the Baptist World Alliance, from which the Centenary Message was drawn, said this about the church –

1. No Christian tradition is the complete expression of the true church. We believe the true church is that company of all people and tribes and tongues that will stand before God at the last and be invited into God’s everlasting Kingdom. It is an eschatological community that God continues to gather to himself. The church as known today is a genuine expression of that universal gathering of all those who through all ages will have been gathered by the Spirit through Christ to the Father in order that God may be all in all to them. While eagerly anticipating that great eschatological moment, we acknowledge that the church in every age is called to proclaim that Kingdom in word and deed, demonstrating a new humanity created in Christ Jesus and

¹ Ruach is the Hebrew word for Spirit. It is a feminine gendered word which is increasingly used by Baptist scholars when talking about the Holy Spirit. See Molly T. Marshall, ‘Transformational Reading: Minding the Spirit’ in *Baptistic Theologies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Autumn 2011 (Prague: IBTS), pp. 2-4.

² This paper was originally a lecture commissioned for the Seventh Forum of the Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools held in Odessa, Ukraine, in July 2012.

³ On this model of baptistic ecclesiology see Keith G. Jones, ‘Towards a Model of Mission for Gathering, Intentional, Convictional *Koinonia*’ in *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Volume four, No. 2, January 2004 (Prague, IBTS), pp. 3-13.

rich koinonia as a sign of God's presence among all believers throughout the world (Acts 1.6-14).⁴

These are fine words about the ecclesial reality we Baptists claim and with a dynamism which looks forward to the future God intends for us; but we also know these important words, penned by an international group of Baptist scholars, might properly reflect what they understand to be the essence of Baptist ecclesiology. Placed alongside this is the inherent missionary thrust⁵ -

2. We believe in the Great Commission. Every believer is empowered by God and called to be a missionary. This is a life that includes learning as a disciple of Christ and sharing His witness. The need to share the Gospel is at the heart of our understanding of the church. The good news of Jesus Christ should be made known in word and deed to every person in every part of the world. Missions is an integral part of our history as Baptists. It must be a vital part of our future for the task of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth is unfinished. We believe that planting new local churches is fundamental to our missionary principle (Matthew 28.16-20).
3. Therefore, we encourage all Baptists everywhere to engage in local mission, in church planting and in prophetically relating God's grace to their particular situations. We join others through our unions, conventions, councils of churches, mission agencies and the BWA to work with each other in cross-cultural mission that the world might believe (John 3.17).⁶

Yet we recognise in many instances that our structures have become moribund and atrophied because we have engaged in some false premises. The first of these is to declare there is a 'pure and universal' Baptist ecclesiology which has been universalised somewhere between Thomas Helwys in 1609⁷ and Johann Gerhard Oncken in 1848.⁸ As my colleague, Parush R. Parushev, constantly argues, in front of the word 'Baptist' we must always place an adjective 'Anglican Baptist, Lutheran Baptist,

⁴ BWA Centenary Message, discussion document for Baptist Unions and seminaries. Presented to the BWA Centenary Congress, Birmingham, UK. The full text can be found with explanation in Keith G. Jones, 'The Baptist World Alliance and Baptist Identity: A reflection on the journey to the Centenary Congress Message, 2005 in *The Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Volume eight, Number 2, January 2008 pp 5-17.

⁵ See Glen Marshall's article in this edition of the *Journal*, pp. 5-21.

⁶ BWA Centenary Message 2005, discussion document for reflection on by Baptist Unions and seminaries.

⁷ On Helwys see Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists 1603-1649* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006).

⁸ On J.G. Oncken see Ian M. Randall, 'Every Apostolic Church a Mission Society: European Baptist Origins and Identity' in Anthony R. Cross (ed.), *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H Y Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

Orthodox Baptist'⁹ as inevitably, it seems, Baptist ecclesial structures tend to be formed by the reaction to, or growing out of the dominant national, state or folk church where specific Baptist groups are established.

Ecclesiology in focus

It has been regularly declared that 'the distinctive feature about Baptists is their doctrine of the Church'.¹⁰ In recent times various Baptist theologians have sought to identify and mark out a combination of theological assertions which might be said to characterise the people called Baptists.¹¹ One assertion, which is not always emphasised outside of Europe,¹² but strongly affirmed within Europe, is that Baptists are not ecclesologically independent, but interdependent. That is to say, though Baptist ecclesiology is founded on the theological assertion that each local gathering,¹³ convictional and intentional community of believers has full authority to interpret the mind of Christ, nevertheless there is an understanding that like-minded communities of believers are to be related to and engaged with for a whole variety of ecclesial purposes. Such a relationship is not simply pragmatic, but is of the theology appropriate to the believers' church tradition.¹⁴ Some have accused those of us who advocate such an ecclesiology of adopting an incipiently sectarian stance, but, as Alan Sell comments 'while this is an ever present danger, if the concepts of discipleship and mission are to the fore in the community of faith, sectarian ghettoization will not be a necessary result'.¹⁵ This point was emphasised in the 2005 BWA Centenary Congress message in the paragraph on the Church and the Kingdom, which reads

[We] 8. Declare that through the Holy Spirit we experience interdependence with those who share this dynamic discipleship of the church as the people of God.¹⁶

The whole of this statement expresses the thinking that has had a shaping influence on European Baptists.

⁹ Parush R. Parushev is Academic Dean at IBTS and an applied theologian and ethicist.

¹⁰ W.T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, rev. ed. (London: Kingsgate, 1932), p. 4.

¹¹ By Baptists it is assumed those within the gathering, or believers' church tradition who are identified with the Baptist World Alliance, or recorded in the book edited by A.W. Wardin, *Baptists Around the World* (Nashville Tenn.: Broadman and Holman, 1995).

¹² See, for instance, D.K. McCall with A.R. Tonks, *Duke McCall: An Oral History* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Baptist History and Heritage Society/Nashville: Fields, 2001).

¹³ See my *A Believing Church: learning from some contemporary Anabaptist and Baptist perspectives* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998), p. 64 and *passim*.

¹⁴ Believers' church is used here as defined by D.F. Durnbaugh in *The Believers' Church: the History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968).

¹⁵ Alan P.F. Sell, *Confessing and Commending the Faith* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002) p. 45.

¹⁶ BWA 'Message from the Centenary Congress', Birmingham, England, July 2005 at <http://www.bwanet.org/congress>, para. 8, accessed 20 January 2007.

Interdependency is in our genes

Interdependent relationships, entered into by local covenanted communities of believers, are not bound to a specific micro-geographical area, but can be recognised in regional, national, continental and international arenas, as the BWA Centenary Congress Message makes clear. The basic model is of the local covenanted gathering church being driven by the Holy Spirit to participate in such trans-local relationships freely and, for theological and missiological reasons, as an outcome of their worship of the Triune God. For local gathering communities, which then directly understand the Holy Spirit to be encouraging them to join and participate in regional and national Baptist ecclesial groupings, there is also a covenant of trust,¹⁷ that empowers and permits the national officers and councils of these groupings to join continental and intercontinental ecclesial-like groupings as if the local church itself made the move towards such wide-scale interdependency. The ecclesial form thus described places the weight of ecclesiology on the local, as opposed to the international, continental, national or regional bodies (in contradistinction to many other Christian World Communions), but I have argued elsewhere¹⁸ that it gives real substance to the ecclesial nature of the 'more-than-local', trans-local, trans-national and trans-continental elements and, though it is principally an ecclesiology from below, it is not vacuous in the other spheres of the more-than-local.

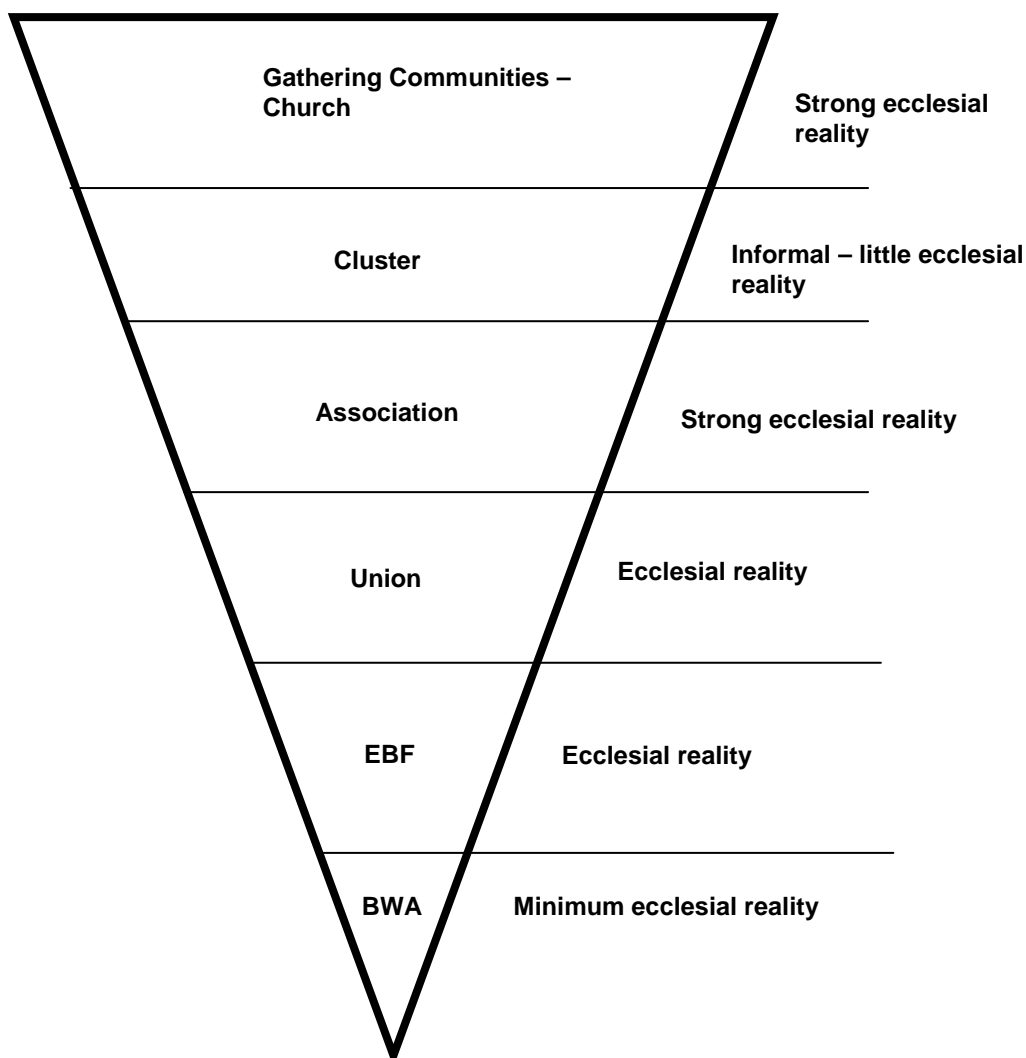
This is a key theological point, because it places Baptist communities, Unions and the EBF itself within a historic Baptist pattern of always seeking to build ecclesial trans-local life outwards from the prime notion of the local church as the base ecclesiological unit, with all other structures being derived in a pyramidal way from the core ecclesial reality. The different ways of conceiving Baptist ecclesial life can be considered diagrammatically.

¹⁷ See R. Kidd (ed.), *On the Way of Trust* (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1997), pp. 22-4 on 'covenant, union and alliance'.

¹⁸ In a paper presented to the BWA Symposium on Baptist Identity and National Culture, Elstal, Germany, May 2001.

The Baptist Pyramid

Diagram 1

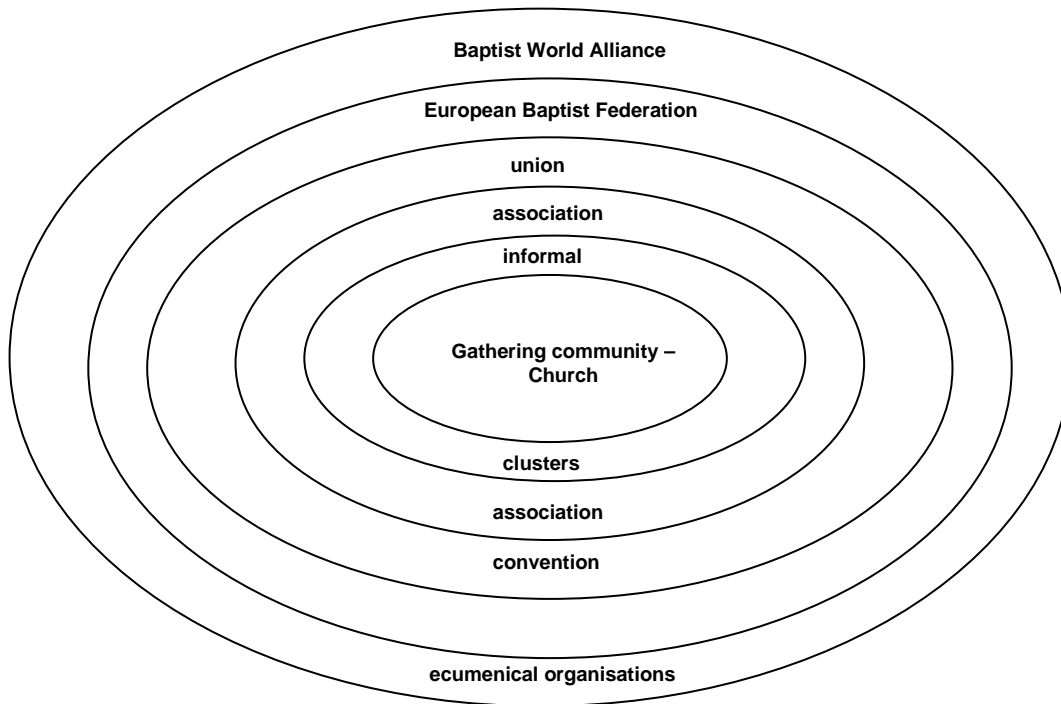


In contrast to this model of ecclesial relationships, Jonathan Edwards argues for a series of concentric circles, and this is the view of some other leading European Baptists.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Revd Jonathan Edwards is the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and expressed this point of view at a workshop on the future structure of the BWA on 30 September 2006 at Valpre, Lyon, France. Personal recollection of the author.

The Baptist Concentric Circles

Diagram 2

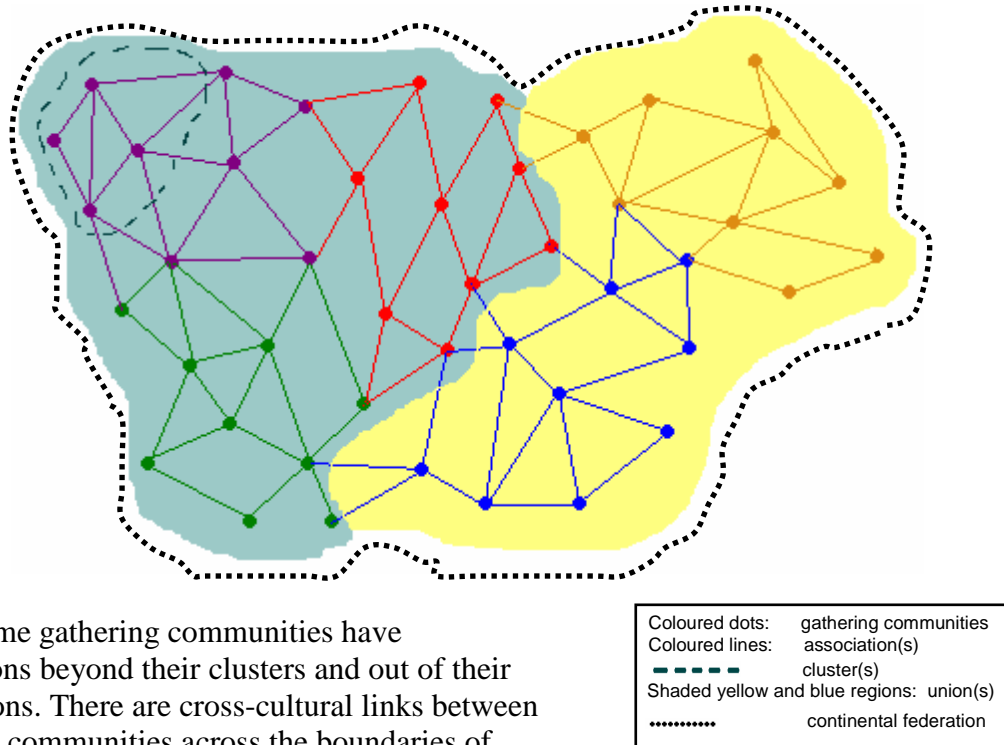


My view is that in contemporary Baptist life the gathering baptistic churches best relate and resource each other in something more akin to a web than either a pyramid or concentric circles, and the theologising behind such an approach is spelt out by N.G. Wright.²⁰

²⁰ N.G. Wright, *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist View* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005).

The Baptist Web

Diagram 3



In whatever way we try to diagrammatically express the ecclesial nature of baptistic communities, what is very clear is that, for Europeans, there is an ecclesial life and reality beyond the local and that normally this is by gathering communities associating together and then by those bodies associating with one another.

Nevertheless, though these post-Oncken dynamics have been expressed principally as relational, only the naïve would assert that European Baptists have steered a clear and dynamic path away from the structural which has juridical aspects to it. Let us momentarily examine several areas of ecclesial life where a structural model has been developed, sometimes over against the ecclesial model which asserts that the gathering community of believers, covenanted together, discerns the mind of Christ, through the Holy Spirit by prayer, reading the scriptures and listening to each other.

Leadership and Ordination

Nowhere do we see so clearly structural outworkings from within our ecclesiology than when we explore leadership issues. We believe God is gathering into local communities women and men so that the believing church might engage in its worship, life and mission. We believe that all within each local community are gifted and that the gifts vary. This is inherent to our base desire for spiritual discernment. Some leaders are gifted to what generally we refer to as ‘Servant Leadership’, though this category is often disputed because leadership can be authoritarian and in many of our Baptist Unions has become controlled through systems of licensing, ordination and supervision (regionally and nationally) by organisms of lesser ecclesial importance than the local church.²¹

In this contested area of discourse within the church, concerns are expressed about leadership locally, regionally, nationally and continental-wide. A US-based organisation, Columbia Partnership, brings together some of the leading thinkers in baptistic leadership in the USA today.²² Recently one of the ‘partners’, Suzanne Goebel, placed an article on line called ‘The Crisis of Leadership’, where she explores contemporary challenges to leadership using, as a conversant partner, an earlier work of James MacGregor Burns and his book on Leadership (1978), looking specifically at issues of

- Power
- Authority
- Transactional and transformational leadership
- Moral leadership
- And the relationship between them all.

In this article I can only touch on the issue of all these turning points of leadership for baptistic churches, but I am inevitably drawn to a focus on transformational and transactional leadership which is *strategic*, because the quest for strategic leadership is, in my view, of paramount importance for baptistic communities in a post-communist, post-foundationalist, post-modern Europe – which is the place where we appear to be.²³

²¹ In Europe Unions with highly defined procedures for selection, training and control of those who seek ordination include Armenia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany, Georgia, Poland, Russia, Sweden.

²² www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org, accessed 29 September 2011.

²³ On ‘post’ Europe see the writings of my colleague, P.R. Parushev, especially the work he has done on baptistic theology following the insights of James Wm. McClendon Junior. See especially *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way*, a paper delivered at a symposium celebrating 1609-2009 at the Vrije University, Amsterdam (Amsterdam: Vrije University, 2009) and P.R. Parushev, *Christianity in Europe: The Way we are now* (Oxford: Church Mission Society, 2009).

Let us be clear what leadership is. It comes from an old North European word meaning a path, road, way or course of a ship – it is a journey word. So it is a word about stepping out on the way. As such, it should be a deeply spiritual word. Leadership has functionality: defining the task, planning, briefing, controlling, supporting, evaluating. We need to ensure quality (who and what you are) and function (what you do). The apparent biblical model of this is rooted in the professional/skilled/proficient (good) shepherd: *Kalos*. Leadership is a key concept for an ecclesial community because leadership has the potentiality to address issues of change and to do so with the resources of faith – spiritual resources. However, in many Baptist communities in Europe we see a management concept of leadership. Here ‘Structures and Spirituality’ can so easily clash.

Certain models of strong, centralised power leadership which we discern in many parts of our European Baptist family have often been called into serious question in this post-communist era. As Suzanne Goebel asserts, ‘power is distinguished, particularly brute power and its cousin tyranny, as that which is only concerned with the needs, goals and motives of the power wielder’.²⁴ With Goebel, I am concerned that a focus on power alone has degraded, if not, demonised the search for Christian spiritual leadership, both within the local church and from the community of faith to the general population, and there can be no true transformation of the ecclesial community, as envisaged in the BWA 2005 statement, in the face of such miss-formed power.

Power-wielders are found in leadership and in the structures of our Baptist unions and in baptistic churches – and they are full of purpose and intent! This is abusiveness and stops the possibility of true strategic spiritual leadership – the radical reformation did not reject a Pope in Rome only to succumb to a pope at home!²⁵ Sadly, as Goebel notes, and I can affirm, there are many pastors who wield and abuse power without any apparent concern for the ‘followers’ as she describes them, the ecclesial community as we might contend, for the growth of the *laos* (whole people of God) and their needs. We might go so far as to assert that leadership based on power defames and denies the model of leadership discovered in Jesus.

Such structural-power-leadership seems at deep variance with the ecclesiology and spirituality of baptistic communities and the working out

²⁴ Suzanne Goebel, *The Crisis of Leadership: Implications for Congregational Leadership*, at www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org, accessed 29 September 2011.

²⁵ This is not my original saying – it came out of the charismatic/new church movement in the UK in the 1980s in the light of the assumption of massive personal power by certain gifted, but flawed, charismatic church leaders.

of what it means to be a gathering, intentional, convictional, missional, baptistic community of faith.²⁶

Leadership in baptistic communities inevitably involves forms of power, but is not itself power assumed by, or controlled by the ‘strategic leader’, but is rather offered power from the spiritual life of the ecclesial community which incorporates the needs and goals of the community and so the leader has a focus not on ‘self’ but on ‘others’.

Baptistic communities cannot value strategic leadership unless there are recognised goals being addressed. Setting goals also requires common agreed and accepted priorities – not only of the strategic leader, but of the ecclesial community. Without this chaos will ensue. Strategic leadership will need to be equipped and focused on both transactional and transformational change. Goebel defines these as follows:

- **Transactional:** the exchange of valued things, with valued ‘things’ being as concrete as property or as abstract as feeling warm and fuzzy.
- **Transformational:** occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.²⁷

Churches and leadership

Do our churches have a culture which values such transformational leadership? What models of leadership ‘fit’ within our culture? What models are actually permitted?²⁸ We affirm the ministry of all (the whole people of God, the *laos*) and the leadership of some. Strategic leaders in our baptistic vision are called out by the church community, the point emphasised by Goebel, and I believe the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit gives her gifts irrespective of gender (Acts 2. 17-18). In some parts of our baptistic family cultural reasons currently appear to dictate that this deep biblical truth should be suppressed, but we know from the very earliest churches (Romans 16. 1-2) that women were in leadership (Romans 16.3) and teaching, and there were women serving as Apostles (Romans 16.7) and Prophets (Acts 21.9, Acts 2. 17-18). Generally baptistic communities believe that strategic leadership is always shared, not least in the biblical covenanted relationship between our Triune God and the community of disciples, but spiritually within the community (Acts: 13.1,

²⁶ This definition of baptistic churches is one developed by P.R. Parushev and Keith G. Jones, based on earlier insights of James Wm. McClendon Jnr.

²⁷ Goebel, *The Crisis of Leadership*.

²⁸ Derek J. Tidball sets out what he perceives as biblical models in *Builders and Fools: Leadership the Bible Way* (Leicester: IVP, 1999).

15.23, Phil. 1.1). So structures call for teams which may have a leader or ‘presiding elder’ (Acts 15).

My assertion is that the New Testament does not lay out one model, or leadership structure as universally – oecumenically – the case. However, at least the following terms are common – apostle, bishop, presbyter, deacon, elder. We find it difficult to agree with certain Episcopal churches (Roman and Anglican especially) that there was only ever one order – bishop, presbyter, deacon – a constant unwavering three-tier model, all tiers being ordained and set aside to this particular ministry with progression from a lower order (deacon) to the highest order (bishop). All these New Testament words are used amongst baptistic communities but not all in the same place. Many European Baptists use presbyter (pastor) and deacon or elder. Some have a regional or national leader (Episcopos/President/Superintendent). Matters of setting aside (ordination) differ markedly.

Issues of authority immediately surface as a crucial factor in leadership. In hierarchical/episcopal churches the *laos* buy into the idea that leadership is declared and has an authority by virtue of office. This authority is declared to be a legitimate power. Some may question it, as it is currently challenged in parts of the Catholic community on such questions as the cover-up of sexual abuse by leaders (priests and bishops) or recent papal announcements refuting any legitimacy for the leadership of women within the community of faith, except in certain proscribed roles such as nuns and ministries of *diakonia*.

For baptistic communities, spiritual authority is generally conveyed by some setting apart of an individual, perhaps through ordination by the wider community or commissioning by the local ecclesia. Generally, authority in strategic leadership is only accorded to a person or group if qualities of spirituality, integrity, authenticity, initiative and moral resolve are determined.²⁹

Gill and Burke³⁰ argue there are seven key features of spiritual leadership to be discerned in the New Testament book which is most clear on the theme, the Acts of the Apostles:

- **Worship:** Strategic leadership comes out of a context of worship. (c.f. early chapters of Acts). From this it is clear the Spirituality of the community produces the structures which permit leadership to blossom.

²⁹ Goebel asserts that in north America there is a major challenge to the notion of authority in leadership in this post modern generation. There is a need, she argues, for protection against absolute power. www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org, accessed 29 September 2011.

³⁰ Robin Gill and Derek Burke, *Strategic Church Leadership* (London: SPCK, 1996).

- **Vision:** arises out of prayer and worship. (Acts 7 and Stephen; Acts 8 and Philip, Acts 9 and Saul/Paul, Acts 10 and Peter). Here again spirituality is placed to the forefront in shaping the community of faith and we must be careful of structures which confine, rather than release, the spiritual visionary dynamic.
- **Sense of priorities:** each of the above is given either clarified or revised priorities (Acts 10.34). Strategic leaders do not do everything, they are deliberately selective and they do not react to 'one event after another'. That is an organisation structural response which has pervaded too often in too many situations.
- **The identification of opportunities:** In Acts 8 the Ethiopian Eunuch presents Philip with an opportunity (differentiation between opportunities and threats is important). Philip sends the Ethiopian eunuch on his way rejoicing. In contrast, Simon the sorcerer, is unmasked as being a threat (Acts 8.13, 8. 18-19).
- **Leadership** is carefully selected for defined tasks: Mathias (Acts 1), selection of Deacons (Acts 6). Selection and role differentiation are associated with leadership.
- **Conflict:** Acts doesn't imply the leader is to be so embracing that everyone loves her or him. This does not mean that leaders set out to engender conflict. However, internal and external conflict are referred to (Acts 2, 4, 5, 8). Standing for truth is crucial, unfortunately many church leaders just want to be loved within the church (Acts 5, 11, 15).
- **Outcomes and accountability:** Acts is interested in outcomes and accountability (Acts 1, 2, 4, 59). Both quantitative and qualitative concern about the health of the church is important.

Gill and Burke go on to suggest that strategic leaders within the structural realities demonstrate:

- Setting priorities – focused on worship;
- Determining objectives – opportunities and threats;
- Strategic planning;
- Ownership and accountability.³¹

If our churches, associations, unions and even the EBF itself in Europe operate with a juridical, set, organisational model, such strategic leadership, driven by the Ruach of God, will become virtually impossible. Here will be the clash between structure and spirituality focused on the Holy Spirit.

³¹ See Gill and Burke, *Strategic Church Leadership*, Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

So I come to the crux of the challenge between structure and spirituality. Early Baptists spent much time discerning the gifts of individuals and then, in community, setting them apart for service. Some were seen as having leadership gifts and set apart in that way. Today, structure often rules with the cult of individualism encouraging someone to believe for themselves that they have leadership potential, go for a seminary education and then fulfil the national organisational requirements of paperwork to be allowed ordination. In an extreme way this can be a clash of two understandings and we who work in seminaries have to work at drawing together the ‘structural’ and the ‘spiritual’ in a creative partnership.

The Spiritual and the Structural and Legal Church

Another classic point of tension between the spiritual and the structural might be focused on the strategic use of assets. As Baptists, to use the McClendon understanding of ‘this is that, then is now’,³² we see ourselves as New Testament communities of faith, which, according to the great Orthodox scholar, Alexander Schmemmann, was a *domus ecclesiae*,³³ a church meeting in houses and enjoying table fellowship.³⁴ Today, baptistic communities appear structurally bound into a Christendom model post fourth century, with buildings for worship, activities, and administration which require repair, maintenance, legal ownership rights, use by the community beyond the one to three hours on the Lord’s Day, and which often sap the energy of the ecclesial communities who inhabit them. The first Baptists in Amsterdam simply rented space, appropriately enough, in a bakehouse³⁵ owned by a Mennonite.³⁶ This might be called an assets-light ecclesiology, but sadly it has been mostly downhill since then with Baptists joining other ‘Christendom’ Christians in purchasing land, putting up buildings to accommodate maximum crowds for Church Anniversaries, Harvest Festivals, Evangelistic rallies and the like. The moment we do this ‘structures’ can dangerously impede ‘spirituality’.³⁷ Inevitably assets – financial or structural – require management which require Trustees, an Association, a Verein or an equivalent to manage them. Now, intrinsically,

³² For an explanation of this phrase see James Wm. McClendon Jr, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986). The other volumes are *Doctrine* and *Witness*.

³³ Alexander Schmemmann, *The eucharist* (New York: St Vladimir’s Press, 2003), pp. 19ff.

³⁴ I argue for eating as a principal activity of the true community of faith in Keith G. Jones, ‘Gathering Worship: Some tentative proposals for reshaping worship in our European Baptist Churches today’, *Journal of European Baptist studies*, Vol. thirteen, no. 1, September 2012.

³⁵ Bethlehem means the ‘house of bread’.

³⁶ Keith Sprunger and Mary Sprunger, ‘The Church in the Bakehouse: John Smyth’s English Anabaptist Congregation at Amsterdam, 1609-1660’, *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 85, April 2011.

³⁷ Keith G. Jones, ‘The authority of the Trust Deed’, *Baptist Quarterly*, Volume XXXIII No 3, July 1989, pp. 103-118.

such legal bodies³⁸ are not, of themselves, bad, but they are inevitably confining and restrictive. They are constructs within the world of the state and as such, almost inevitably, a part of the Christendom order.³⁹ Christian mission, following the Ruach of God, is much more dynamic and interpretive, engaging with an ever-changing world and, I believe, that is why spirituality must have precedence in baptistic communities, over structure.

For ten years I was General Secretary of the Yorkshire Baptist Association.⁴⁰ The history of Baptists in Yorkshire shows, generally and persuasively, a dynamic growth and expansion from the 1660s through to, certainly, the 1980s.⁴¹ Over three hundred years, populations move, situations change and, in my ministry, I found I faced two phenomena – the establishment of new churches in growing communities on the lower lands around Leeds, York and Sheffield and the abandonment of chapel and Sunday School buildings on the Pennine hills where there had been thriving communities in the 1700s, but now there was no population,⁴² worship had ceased but the structure, the land and the building remained; a legacy of once active and vibrant Christian communities, but populations, life, the Ruach of God moves on and soon only the shell of faith – artefacts – remain. This is the structural reality of Christianity. In south west Russia some years ago the then President of Russian Baptists, Pietr Konovalchik, asked me what I thought of the amazing mock-gothic chapel buildings Russian Baptists had erected in the city of Bryansk. Of course, I congratulated him on the drive and energy of Russian Baptists to erect three (or possibly four) amazing edifices for Baptist believers in this once-closed city, with a population of nearly 500,000. It is a centre for steel and railway carriage manufacture.⁴³ Interestingly, since the collapse of communism, the population is declining, heavy metal manufacturing closing down and it is already mirroring the decline of the Welsh coalfields in the early 1900s and the Yorkshire woollen industry in the 1960s. As populations move, will it be possible to maintain the Baptist ‘tabernacles’?

³⁸ Titles vary across Europe and the relationship of such assets to local churches varies. In some countries all assets are held by the union as a *verein* or association. In other countries local churches can be legally registered as ‘holding bodies’. The system hardly matters. The structures impose duties and disciplines unknown to the New Testament church.

³⁹ Nigel Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, church and the social orders in the theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ www.yba.org.uk, accessed 1 June 2012.

⁴¹ Ian M. Sellers (ed.), *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire 1647-1987* (Leeds: YBA, 1987).

⁴² A classic example of this is the church of John Fawcett at Waingate, Hebden Bridge, now in the care of the Churches Historic Trust. John Fawcett is the author of the hymn, ‘Blest Be the Tie that Binds’, widely regarded as the ‘Baptist anthem’.

⁴³ www.wikipedia.org: Bryansk, accessed 1 June 2012.

This second example points to how assets lead to the necessity for structures, which, with time, may have the ability to hinder the people of God to respond positively to the Ruach of God, move on, adapt and develop in their mission and discipleship.

The responsibilities of seminaries

I have focused on those engaged in the work of developing strategic leaders for the service of the churches that the mission of God might be supported and enhanced. My task is surely to draw out conclusions, if only tentative, on the interaction between ‘structures’ and ‘spirituality’.

In so doing I want to start and end with ‘spirituality’. I believe that as seminaries currently exist, they certainly exist to inculcate a pattern of spirituality on the life of the students in community. At this point I certainly take my inspiration from Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his Confessing Church seminary at Finkenwald in Germany in the dark days of the Second World War.⁴⁴ I believe such an understanding of the first place of spirituality in community⁴⁵ is the only way we can have an effective integration of the twin poles of structure and spirituality. Paul Fiddes, in an excellent introductory article to a key collection of Baptist essays on this theme declares, ‘Spirituality has been moulded by an ecclesiology where the local congregation stands under the direct rule of Christ’⁴⁶ and where we have a prime duty to set our communities of learning first and foremost as spiritual communities seeking the mind of Christ. This is in sharp contrast to the normal demands of academia and against what appears to be the spirit of the age. I am nothing, if not a dissenter!

In 2003 I tried to articulate my notion of how a seminary, such as those in membership with CEBTS, might develop to inculcate a flexible spirituality in our students and act as a counterpoint to my own understanding that many seminaries, owned by their Unions, are intended to be places to ‘teach’ denominational structure and promote conformity of what it means to be, for example, a ‘British’, ‘German’ or ‘Ukrainian’ Baptist.

⁴⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, translated by John W. Doberstein (London: SCM Press, 1954).

⁴⁵ Multiple compilers, *Take our Moments and Our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007).

⁴⁶ Paul Fiddes (ed.), *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality* (Oxford: Regent’s Study Guides, 2008).

What sort of community should foster deep spirituality and challenge a natural push toward structure?

Seminaries are, in a sense, irregular places within the Christian Church. If gathering intentional *koinonia* of believers⁴⁷ are the true ecclesia, then anything which is not simply formed of God in Christ, drawing together believers in an intentional community to worship him and engage in His mission, the *Missio Dei*,⁴⁸ must be irregular.

Perhaps the old ‘dissenting academies’ were a more appropriate model, over against the modern seminary, when a handful of students were attached to a revered and scholarly pastor, often living in his home (as with John Fawcett and the beginnings of the Northern Baptist Education Society in the 1700s⁴⁹) and belonging to the church of which their mentor was pastor?

However, that is not the case today. With advances in knowledge and the growth of the many disciplines within theology, the formation of ‘enablers’⁵⁰ to serve the churches requires assistance of several disciplines and educators from different backgrounds to offer any chance of the learners understanding sufficient of the whole story of the people of God not to lead those they are called to *enable* from orthodoxy and orthopraxis into deep error or heresy.

In my view, Dietrich Bonhoeffer set out a simple but profound model in the desire to create the Confessing Church Academy at Finkenwald.⁵¹ Of course, he was a Lutheran creating a community of young men⁵² for a church engaged in a deep struggle for the soul of Christianity against the German National Church and the Führer principle, but nevertheless some of his insights can usefully be applied to us.

The basic realities

The Baptist Unions of Europe and the Middle East, together with other Christian traditions and organisations, send people from the ages of

⁴⁷ For some opening up of this idea of the church see my article in the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Vol four, No 2, January 2004.

⁴⁸ The mission of the church ought to be a reflection and participation in the mission of God and in a real sense the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.

⁴⁹ John Fawcett was sent students who lived in his home at Hebden Bridge. In some senses it was a replication of the idea of the apprentice going to work with the pupil-master. Of course it has limitations in the lack of cross-fertilisation where several ‘pupil-masters’ are involved.

⁵⁰ I use this term rather than pastor, which has authority overtones. I am seeking to move us away from hierarchical models of formation to forming women and men who see themselves in servant leadership enabling churches to fulfil their worship and mission.

⁵¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer sets this out in *Life Together*.

⁵² It was only men – what problems he might have faced with a mixed community!

nineteen upwards to IBTS to be formed at three different levels (Certificate, Master, Doctoral) from between nine months, to what can seem like an infinity of years. Also there are often travelling missionaries, volunteers and others who live for one or more years within the community.

Some of the enablers within the community commit themselves to periods of five or more years to this enterprise. Others choose to live within the community for varying lengths of time. These realities mean that there is a core of people who grow together, perhaps over a two or more year period and who, whether deliberately or unwittingly, provide the basic shape of community into which others must fit. Those who pass through the community for shorter spaces of time inevitably influence the community, but may not be able to move some of the basic building blocks set in place and which the core people will not allow to be moved.⁵³

Of course there are those who live with, and yet in a measure apart from the community for longer periods but are not part of the core, who do try from time to time to exert an influence and know what levers to pull and pulleys to spin to apply pressure to the norms of the community.⁵⁴ Yet, by and large, a core group of between twelve and eighteen people at IBTS really are those who are the committed heart and who have it within themselves to shape the community at a deep level.

What is our basic shape?

At IBTS worship forms the heart of this shape, built around morning worship at 09.00 and the Wednesday Eucharist. Some who join the community seek to rebel against this 'liturgical' spiritual style,⁵⁵ but it might reasonably be argued that most intentional communities in church history have had the rhythm of worship, work, shared meals and recreation as the norm. Bonhoeffer argued strongly for the day beginning with worship. At IBTS we have compromised by having the day begin with breakfast, but nevertheless, morning worship still marks the first point at which the community is formed for the day as we all sit in chapel together.

⁵³ Such basic building blocks at IBTS are the physical structure, certain policies on lifestyle, the basic pattern of morning prayer, Wednesday Eucharist and daily morning community coffee breaks.

⁵⁴ An example might be the positive desire to get our community to be a haven for those rescued from trafficking by Dr Luran Bethel, an ABC-IM missionary who lived on campus for several years.

⁵⁵ I have had students who reacted initially negatively about such patterns, but on leaving IBTS missed the ethos very much and sought to replicate it in seminaries and Bible schools where they served subsequently.

For most other communities the day would end with worship, too,⁵⁶ but at IBTS we have not been able to develop this, though the Certificate students have developed patterns of evening prayer and Bible study and, in some years, at 22.00 the whole student community has had Vespers once a week. We seek to introduce different historic patterns of community worship and, each year, we expose our students to the rhythm of the Northumbria Community.⁵⁷

Another key moment for the forming of community in a spiritual way is around the meal table. The monastic tradition took this very seriously and the whole Gospel account places meals at the very heart of meeting with Jesus, from the wedding feast at Cana, through the revolutionary assembly on the hillside, to the meal in the upper room and then at Emmaus and, of course, the breakfast at the lakeside. Where else can we expect to meet Jesus aside from when we are eating? At IBTS this has been a real dilemma. Mass catering in a self-service dining hall at lunchtime is a very poor substitute, especially when we are then reduced to sitting at small rectangular tables (reminiscent of the dollies tea cup beloved of certain Baptists for the communion wine in some aberrations of the Eucharist). For some years the single Masters students operated a 'Kitchen of Love' and perhaps struck a modest blow for another sense of community.

We have, in a sense, no community forum to talk with each other and develop a sense of community. We recognise the constraints of the academic life, the mix of activities – seminary, hotel and conference centre – and so we feel we are disabled from taking 'community' further. We see too the differences of the people who come – young single people full of energy, families – some living off campus, volunteers – some of whom are getting on in years and limited. The diversity of people in one way helps us reflect the reality of life beyond IBTS, but also places challenges, certainly against the model of a monastery or the vision of Bonhoeffer. Then there is culture and language. There are some very different expectations culturally – English people wait to be invited before going visiting. Some Slavic groups never issue an invitation to cross their threshold, but expect people just to turn up. Some cultures appear to make everyone their instant friend (promptly to forget them when out of sight); people from some other

⁵⁶ At my home seminary morning prayers, after breakfast, marked the beginning of the working day and evening prayers at 21.00 marked the point at which the ordinands could consider ceasing to work on their theological papers for the evening, though, actually much real theologising took place in the inevitable sharing of coffee in a dormitory room after evening prayers, or for braver souls, the visit to the pub for 'last orders please'.

⁵⁷ For more information about the Northumbria Community see <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/>, accessed 18 June 2012.

cultures are slow to make friendships, but then they become deep and lasting.

Can more be done by seminaries to create a lasting community spirituality which will modify the juridical structures of our Unions?

Until the greater community (the EBF, academia, etc) change profoundly, it is unlikely we can convert ourselves into a gathering intentional community of disciples. When my academic dean, Parush Parushev, has talked in the past of IBTS as a ‘monastery’ he is raising a model which also has flaws – potential detachment from the world, not taking seriously the community of women and men,⁵⁸ struggling to relate community to the world of higher education and the fact that we come having made different ‘vows’ to each other and to our churches. When talking about a gathering intentional community in an Anabaptist way, I recognise we cannot create a little Moravian Anabaptist village in, for instance, the heart of Prague with our own flour mill, bakery, pottery, weaving shed and farm.

Nevertheless, though we see the difficulties and the pitfalls, can more be done to enhance a greater sense of spiritual community without abandoning our responsibility to equip enablers for the structures of Baptist Unions in the EBF?

Being more creative about what we have

Do we really help people understand what we already have and why some things are important? It is clear that the model academic staff present is crucial – and here the informal modelling can often be more influential than the formal.

I believe all of us in our CEBTS member seminaries have had students in our institutions who seem destined to live for the structures – do the lectures, write the papers, conform to the desires of the Union for an educated ministry. So we come across students who think working through the night and stumbling bleary-eyed into lectures without breakfast is what we want from them. What an aberration of our intentions!

⁵⁸ Yes, I know, the Abbess Hilda presided over a mixed community of women and men in the Celtic monastery at Whitby, but it seems beyond most mixed groups of women and men to keep the simple monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

What cannot be changed

Most seminaries are owned by Baptist Unions which have appointed some people to run the institution who are more ‘permanent’ and others pass through as students and community members. Those given the greater responsibility for the community are baptistic in tradition, but with different cultural values. In many instances some live on and some off site. Some have immediate and pressing family responsibilities, others are slightly freer. There is no simple way our world can be turned upside down to develop a much closer community because we do not all arrive at this place from a common desire to be part of a gathering intentional convictional community, and even if that were our aim, the pattern of gathering and the specific clustering of convictions might vary across the group.

So, alongside the demands of some students and the deep longings of some more permanent members of our community, a certain realism may be needed. If we cannot do everything some of us might want to do, can we do something? Can we emphasise the spiritual community and relax our grip on preparing structurally conformist pastors who miss out on the Spirit blowing where she will?

A modest way forward

I have spent the greater part of my ministry in the juridical sphere of Baptist structures – ten years as a ‘General Secretary’ of a British regional Baptist Association, eight years as Deputy General Secretary of a Union, sixteen years on the EBF Executive Committee, ten years working on restructuring the Baptist World Alliance.

But now I understand this – so much of structural conformity can debilitate true openness to the Ruach of God. Seminaries can be guilty of forming students to be experts in denominational doctrine, juridical procedures and a conformist identity because we are owned, paid by and answerable to these very same structures, potentially failing to develop true disciples of Jesus Christ who listen in communities of faith more intentionally for the Spirit of God by being women and men of deep and abiding spirituality.

As I approach the end of my service as Rector of IBTS I find myself asking what I value most in seeking to serve God and the EBF family through fifteen tense, demanding and troublesome years. It is, in the end, the formative experience of community spirituality, daily worship, the

weekly Eucharist,⁵⁹ the shared meals and refreshment breaks, the common table. We have had brilliant students who have gone on to do outstanding doctorates; we have had able administrators now leading our EBF unions and seminaries; we have had below average characters who somehow serve the churches; but when I look at our blog site, our Facebook pages and read the email testimonies, it's not the outstanding theological lectures, the erudite post graduate seminars, the intense comparison of different national approaches to the practice of ministry, but rather it is the circle of prayer in the chapel which is most often commented on as formative and memorable.

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⁵⁹ See my 1999 Whitley Lecture, *A Shared Meal and a Common Table* (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1999).

Book Reviews

A Pledge of Love: The Anabaptist Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier

Brian C Brewer

Paternoster Press, Milton Keynes, 2012. 201 pages

ISBN 978-1-84227-729-4

Wounds That Heal: The Importance of Church Discipline within Balthasar Hubmaier's Theology

Simon Victor Goncharenko

Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon, 2012. 142 pages

ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-604-6

Balthasar Hubmaier is a major focus of attention amongst baptistic scholars today, and for that we want to give thanks. H. Wayne Walker Pipkin, in his important review of the place of Hubmaier (*Scholar, Pastor, Martyr: The Life and Ministry of Balthasar Hubmaier*), his IBTS Hughey Lectures of 2006, brought back to the forefront of many scholars in the Radical Reformation tradition the importance of the theologian Dr Hubmaier. Partly disregarded by the Mennonite Anabaptist tradition because of his advocacy of the possibility of the Godly Magistrate, it has been left, principally, to Baptist scholars to mine the insights of this important figure of the Radical Reformation whose ideas have a pertinent application to baptistic communities today.

Torsten Bergsten paved the way (*Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr*, translated by Irwin Barnes and W.R. Estep and published by Judson Press in 1978) to be followed by John Howard Yoder and Walker Wayne Pipkin with their translation of key Hubmaier texts (*Balthasar Hubmaier*, Herald Press, 1989). Now we begin to see contemporary doctoral dissertations on Hubmaier emerging as monographs to help us both explore the theology of Hubmaier and apply that theology to contemporary baptistic life today.

So, we applaud this growth in Hubmaier studies and both monographs deserve our attention. Certainly, the sure hand of scholarship rests with Brewer, who is on the staff of Baylor University. He takes the texts of Hubmaier, acknowledging his importance as a pastoral theologian, and this adds significantly to the refutation of those from the traditions of the Magisterial Reformation who have criticised the Anabaptists and Baptists for lacking any real sacramental theology. John Rempel (*The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, Herald Press, 1993) sought to offer an

important corrective to this view, but Brewer takes this much further and, in an inciteful work, provides important clear evidence for a strong sacramental stream within some sections of the diverse Anabaptist and subsequent baptistic movements. Brewer explores in detail the sacramental theology of Hubmaier, both in respect to the Eucharist and the Baptism of Believers. We are fortunate that Hubmaier produced both liturgies and pamphlets expounding his views during his ministry at Mikulov, Moravia from 1526-1527. Though this ministry was short, his work and writing was dynamic and far-reaching. Brewer's assertion that Hubmaier's writing provides a theology of the sacraments of the Eucharist and the Baptism of Believers for modern baptistic communities is bold, but in the view of this reviewer, totally tenable.

Goncharenko, of Russian Baptist lineage, turns his attention to ecclesial discipline expounded by Hubmaier. Goncharenko, now ministering to expatriate Russian communities in north America, seeks to hark back to days of tight ecclesial discipline and finds Hubmaier a congenial conversant partner to address the errant ways of expatriate Baptists from the former USSR now settled in Texas. Hubmaier was, of course, anxious to develop the notion of a believing and disciplined church and Goncharenko helpfully explores his position in the contextual situation of the 1500s. Clearly, Hubmaier was concerned about the moral laxity associated with aspects of the Magisterial Reformation and focuses on these. Goncharenko notes that the approach of Hubmaier was much more civil than some of the other Anabaptists. Whilst a believing church was important, it was not carried to the extreme – when the ban was applied, it did not forbid other members of the family having contact with the one who was banned. Goncharenko explores the anthropological insights of Hubmaier in a useful way. He reminds us that the Pledge of Love at the Eucharist sets out the notion of the mutuality of responsibility for sisters and brothers within the believing church. This concern is worthy of contemporary reflection given the tendency of many baptistic communities to place discipline in the hands of elders and leaders. The Foreword by Paige Patterson is somewhat anachronistic for a book produced in 2012. He refers to 'Czechoslovakia', which disappeared in the mid 1990s!

Both books are worthy of study as we recover so much of value from this remarkable theologian of Anabaptism, Balthasar Hubmaier.

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Baptist Theology

Stephen Holmes

T and T Clark International, London, 2012. 174 pages

ISBN 978-0-567-00031-6

Is there such a thing as 'Baptist Theology'? Thirty years ago this might have been a reasonable question, but thanks to such influential figures as James Wm McLendon Junior and his three volume *Systematic Theology* (originally published by Abingdon Press, but now republished by Baylor University Press), it is a live issue and there is a growing body of theological writing which we can certainly identify as 'baptistic' if not always so simply Baptist. Stephen R. Holmes, a Baptist minister and senior lecturer in theology at St Andrew's University in Scotland, offers this basic volume in a series on 'Doing Theology' published by T and T Clark.

Writing from the perspective of the United Kingdom, inevitably Holmes concentrates on British Baptist scholars such as Paul Fiddes, John Colwell and Nigel G. Wright. Chapters do attempt to describe Baptist theological development in the United Kingdom, North America and Australasia (though by-passing the important contributions of Brian Winslade on ecclesiology and Anne Wilkinson-Hayes on practical theology). Continental Europe is almost ignored, which is a pity, as some of the most baptistic and original theology is emerging from the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

Holmes suggests continental European Baptist life is 'Calvinistic', but surely this is not quite the case? 'Arminian' Baptist theology has been foundational in the Ukraine and as Gregory L. Nichols has shown, the very important Ivan V. Kargel, the shaper of Russian dogmatic Baptist theology, is not to be classified in this narrow way.

This is a useful primary for the undergraduate theology student and has helpful sections on Believer's Baptism, Ecclesiology, Interdependency, Religious Freedom, and Mission. Within a small space it encompasses much that the student, embarking on theological discovery, will find useful. However, the richness and diversity of Baptist theology in Europe is more helpfully explored by a wider range of conversant 'voices' in the *Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought*.

I hope students will read Stephen Holmes and have their appetites whetted to move on to the *Dictionary* which Holmes cites as 'an important window to the disparate Baptist traditions of greater Europe'. It is gratifying to see a book like this published by T and T Clark as part of a wider project, and Stephen Holmes has done a good job for a United Kingdom and US readership within the confines of size and scope. As

Curtis Freeman comments on the cover ‘it is a clear and concise summary’. Hopefully, before long, we will see more expansive works from this gifted author.

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The Origins of the Baptist Movement among the Hungarians

George Alexander Kish
Brill, Leiden, 2012, 487 pages
ISBN 978-900-421-11360

If someone wants to disclose his or her opinion on a particular topic, being half-educated about something is the most dangerous position in which to be. Not only experts of the given field, but those who admit their complete ignorance are safer, because they can disguise their observations as humble questions. The *semidoctus* lacks both authoritative knowledge and the luxury of being an outsider. Being asked to give a review on *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, I found myself in the uncomfortable position described above. I am not a historian; consequently I am ignorant of both the methodologies of the discipline and the kind of new discoveries needed for original research. But as a Hungarian Baptist theologian, who has recently studied Hungarian Baptist church history, I cannot claim to be an ‘outsider’. I share the fact of my half-educatedness as a precautionary statement if it is felt that any of my critical observations concerning this book are imprecise.

This book is the fifty-fourth volume of Brill’s series in Church History. It is the doctoral dissertation of the Hungarian-American Kish, which was previously defended at the VU University in Amsterdam. Its subject is described by its subtitle: ‘A History of the Baptists in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1846 to 1893’. It ‘examines the two attempts to establish a sustained Baptist mission in the Kingdom of Hungary during the nineteenth century’ (quoted on the back cover) with the primary purpose of examining why the first attempt in 1846 was unsuccessful, and what made the second one, beginning in 1873, a success. The book also concentrates on the relationship between the two attempts.

There are five main chapters. The first introduces the origins of Hungarian Baptists. The author describes the viewpoints, methodologies and common periodisations of Hungarian Baptist historiographical scholarship. He acknowledges that he himself operates within a tradition, and points out the similarities and differences between himself and his

predecessors. He sets the scope of his study from 1846 (the arrival of the missionary Johann Rottmayer in Hungary) to 1893 (the year the first two seminary-educated Hungarian Baptist theologians returned to Hungary from Hamburg). Kish defines the research question for his study as: 'Why did the Baptist mission under Heinrich Meyer mark the beginning of the first sustained Baptist mission in Hungary, while the first attempt under Johann Rottmayer failed to become firmly implanted in Hungary?' (p.11). He presents, as one of his main arguments, that while 'Heinrich Meyer believed himself to be the sole father of the Hungarian Baptist movement', this is not true, as he had built on the work of his predecessors, namely Rottmayer and his compatriots.

The second chapter deals with the first attempt by Rottmayer. It describes the contemporary social and politico-religious context, and then describes the Onckenian roots of the movement, telling how Baptist missionaries, such as Rottmayer, Scharschmidt and Woyka were sent from the church of the 'father of the Continental Baptists' to the Kingdom of Hungary. The history of the first missions in Pest and Pécs is discussed, followed by subchapters dealing with the impact of the 1848 revolution and the events that followed affecting the newborn Hungarian Baptist movement.

The third chapter is called the 'Hidden Years', and it describes and analyses the work of the colporteur Antal Novák, a bridge-figure between Rottmayer's and Meyer's efforts, followed by several subchapters on Rottmayer's later work in Kolozsvár (this city is also known as Cluj or Cluj-Napoca in Romanian, and as Klausenburg in German). Kish also tells the readers about the controversy as to whether or not the first Hungarian Baptist (Rottmayer) also became the first Hungarian Adventist.

The fourth chapter deals with the second attempt to establish a sustained Baptist mission in Hungary, namely that of Heinrich Meyer. After a thorough mapping of the religious situation of the churches in the age of liberalism, this chapter deals with Meyer's life and ministry, followed by an analysis of the Hungarian Baptist Movement under his leadership (social composition, congregational life, internal organisation, etc.). In the fifth and final chapter the author draws his conclusions and gives an answer to the question, which he had asked previously, namely, why was the second missional attempt (that of Meyer) more successful in Hungary than the first one?

Here are my critical remarks, which have to be read in the light of the introductory paragraph. In my view, the book's main theses concerning the relationship between the first and the second Baptist missionary attempts in Hungary do not constitute new academic contributions *per se*. As

Hungarian Baptists already knew that Meyer built on the preparatory work of Rottmeyer, Novák and others, Kish's 'dialogue with Heinrich Meyer' (p.3), and his 'proving' that Meyer was not the sole founder of the Hungarian Baptist movement, is somewhat forced.

Notwithstanding, I by no means say that the book would be merely a translation/compilation of Hungarian scholars' previous works; on the contrary, it has a significant amount of original research. Obviously, Kish has done his homework, and spent an enormous amount of time in the archives. He consults a large number of primary sources in their Hungarian and German originals. While he acknowledges that he is 'operating within a tradition of Hungarian Baptist historiographical scholarship' (p.2), he has done a fine job on providing the perspective of outsiders, e.g. he often quotes contemporary anti-baptist tracts and articles. He seeks to place the events in their broader historical context, and a main strength of his work is his success in describing and analysing the web of contemporary situations and events. It is his work in this area with which he surpasses all his Hungarian scholarly predecessors, who have mainly written for their own community with the intent of building or strengthening their Baptist identity (p.2).

The architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's famous saying, 'God is in the details' proves to be true in the case of Kish's book. If readers get through the superficiality of the main theses and immerse themselves in the depths of the author's detailed descriptions of the era, they will find the book's hidden treasures. Kish's work, by virtue of the fact that it is written in English, brings the history of Hungarian Baptists closer to the international scholarly community, and it is also recommended to those English-speaking Hungarian Baptists (especially pastors and theologians) who want to better understand the origins of their own tradition.

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'To Such as These' : The Child in Baptist Thought

Andrew J Goodliff

Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent's Park College, Oxford,
2012. 91 pages.

ISBN 978-1– 907600-03-06

For Baptists, with a theology of response to God in Jesus Christ through believing faith and admission to the ecclesial community by subsequent baptism as a believer, children have presented us with a theological

challenge. What is their place in the gathering church before mature faith commitment and baptism? How are they incorporated into the believing community as they grow and develop?

Andy Goodliff, a young British Baptist scholar, faces these challenges squarely from different aspects. Goodliff builds on earlier work in the United Kingdom, especially by Geoffrey W. Rusling and the British Baptist Union study group which produced the largely-ignored report *The Child and the Church* (1966), which advocated a model placing children in a revived form of catechumenate in the porous ecclesial community.

His chapter on the Bible draws attention to the centrality of the use of Mark 10.13-16, but then, rightly, comments that we have not taken seriously other passages of the New Testament referring to children, working with these in the same intense way. Given our approach to scripture, this is an important task awaiting further activity.

In succeeding chapters Goodliff seeks to trace the theological understanding of Baptists by reference to post second world war books of orders of worship in the United Kingdom and the way the service of Infant Thanksgiving and Blessing has been developed and used amongst British Baptists. He also explores important issues of faith development arising out of the work of James Fowler and draws attention to the recent work of Anne Phillips on the faith of girls.

At the end of each chapter he provides a helpful summary of points made and questions to be answered. He draws conclusions that children are a gift to us and are endowed with human dignity and value, who need nurture into discipleship because they are born 'within the sphere of Christ', and potential responders to the gospel and participators in baptism. He supports Rusling's concern for a more dynamic model of the catechumenate and argues for an open table. His concluding chapter is a re-working of a 'liturgy of infant presentation' based on that articulated in *Gathering for Worship* (Ellis and Blyth).

This is an important work on a much-neglected topic and deserves careful attention.

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